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CLARA BUTT



Fr.

DAME CLARA BUTT



CLARA BUTT

HER LIFE-STORY

BY

WINIFRED PONDER

AUTHOR OF

"AN IDLER IN THE ISLANDS"

WITH A FOREWORD BY

DAME CLARA BUTT

AND TWENTY-FOUR ILLUSTRATIONS
IN HALF-TONE

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FOREWORD

I SUPPOSE that every one who appears professionally before the public must necessarily become the object of a certain amount of interest. And it seems that those who constitute the public feel some curiosity as to whether the artist who appears before them, wrapt in the glamorous mystery of stage or platform, can really be a human individual, made up of ordinary hopes and loves and fears just like their own. Hence, no doubt, the demand for biographies—autobiography, for choice; or, failing that, a 'life' written by some one who has possessed the friendship and confidence of the 'celebrity' in question.

Several times during recent years I have been asked to write my 'reminiscences' and had so far acquiesced as to start upon an attempt to ransack memory, and to gather together a miscellany of stray notes. But, pleasant enough though it was to recall the early days that led to success, and all the interesting experiences that followed it, I soon realized that it was not in me to make such an effort of egotism. I simply couldn't do it! I felt that the boredom of it would soon permeate my writing, and get through to my readers. And that was how it was that Winifred Ponder—who had been a pupil and close friend of my dear master Henry Blower, at the Royal College of Music, and whom I met again in Australia in 1925, after many years—came to undertake the work instead of me, and to write this story of my life.

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Miss Ponder has established a high reputation in Australia, as well as in South Africa, as a journalist. Her book on the South Sea Islands aroused much interest, and was most favourably reviewed. She brought a keen enthusiasm to the task of writing my life-story, and I only wish I could have helped her more! But there is a peculiar streak in my make-up that can only be described as a kind of carelessness. I never kept a diary; I never even kept with care all those wonderfully interesting letters and mementoes of my early days which would have been so valuable in compiling this book; and so, somehow or other, they are all lost, stolen, or strayed. So my friends of childhood, my school-mistresses, teachers, and others, have had to tell the tale; and the way Miss Ponder has handled this jumble of information, and has woven it together, as it were, into a consecutive story, seems to me really marvellous.

I sincerely hope that my readers (I love writing that word 'readers'—it sounds so grand! But, for the moment, you *are* my readers, aren't you?)—anyway, I hope that you will take all I have said into consideration when you read this story of Clara Butt's life, and just try to visualize, if you can, my poor biographer trying to get out of me the date or year of some really important happening, and trying in vain, though I could perfectly remember not only the date, but even the very hour, perhaps, of some incident that had appealed to me, but was quite unimportant to the story. She has remained cheerful to the end, though; and our friendship is intact, thank heaven!

When the publishers asked me to write a 'Foreword'

FOREWORD

I thought it was rather silly, but I suppose a 'Foreword' really constitutes a kind of 'push off'; and when I think of it like that I know that I am pleased and very happy to give it. With both hands I give that gentle push, and breathe a fervent wish for the book's success, with a hope that it will be treated kindly.

If the public will only be as kind to the book as they have been to me, then indeed all will be well! My heart grows big with gratitude when I think of the way that I have been listened to all these years, in all parts of the world, and I like to think that the echoes of my voice may remain in some hearts for many a day.

Soon I may sing no more to you; and already I am keeping eyes and ears open for some one who will take my place—or, better still, for some one with a wonder-voice who will make a place all her own.

Here's to her, whoever she may be! And may I be there to listen, and to smile encouragement, as so many did to me.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Clara Butt-Telford." The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Postscript.—Before I wrote my own little Foreword—as I was assured that an introduction of the kind was indispensable to a book such as this—I decided to

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appeal to my friend Bernard Shaw, and wrote him the following note :

DEAR BERNARD SHAW,

Will you be an angel and write a Foreword to the story of my life ? I know I am asking a terrific thing, and I shall quite understand if you refuse.

Your sincere and always admiring

CLARA BUTT-RUMFORD

And this is what he wrote in reply :

WHITEHALL COURT

21st October, 1927

MY DEAR CLARA BUTT,

Goodness gracious, I'd never dare ! You are a much bigger person than I. I should look like a ridiculous little busybody making a pretentious bow in *your* limelight. I cannot imagine anything on earth more insufferably superfluous than an introduction of Clara Butt to the British public. I simply won't.

And, anyhow, what could I say ? "Witnessed her *début* as Orfeo. Loved her. Would have married her if she'd asked me. She didn't. Might actually have chosen Bernard Shaw, and chose a Mr Rumford instead ! What a woman !"

Don't you let anybody touch your book except yourself. If you find anyone impertinent enough to venture, burn his Foreword and drop him into the dustbin.

Ever and ever,

G. BERNARD SHAW

He *says* he won't. But surely there was never request more gracefully granted ? So I wrote and thanked him warmly—and proudly print his acquiescent refusal as the preface to my life-story !

C. B.-R.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

I SHOULD like to express my very great appreciation of the generous assistance which I have received from Dame Clara Butt's innumerable friends in the making of this book. The warm interest that has been shown by every one from whom I sought information, their eagerness to be of service, and their enthusiasm for the book's success were striking proof (had proof been needed) of the place she holds in their hearts. To all of them I tender my most grateful thanks—as well as to the subject of the book herself—for never had Boswell so patient and helpful or so unruffleable a Johnson! I have to thank Captain Rumford too for his kindly help on many occasions—though I have one serious grudge against him: he placed a complete embargo upon all but the irreducible minimum of references to himself; and it was only because it proved impossible to write his wife's life-story without some slight allusion to her husband that he consented to make even the very few, brief appearances that he does in the following pages.

WINIFRED PONDER

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CHAPTER I

Introduction—Ancestry—A Runaway Marriage—An Encore in Jersey—Family Fortunes—Loss of the *Crystal*

IT is certain that no singer within living memory—and, so far as we know, none in history—has ever captured the popular imagination and affection as they have been won and held by Clara Butt. Her position is unique. She stands out head and shoulders from among her contemporaries in personality as she does in stature, and the amazing range and power and beauty of her voice have placed it beyond comparison with all others. That superb voice alone must inevitably have won world-wide fame for her. Yet to Clara Butt her voice is only a means to express something greater than any voice—greater even than music itself—a spiritual force that must have found expression through her by some means even if she had had no voice at all. But, having that stupendous gift, she has wielded, and still wields, a power for good that has made her (as a celebrated divine once said of her) “one of the greatest missionaries of our time.”

Temporal power may be won by force, but spiritual power is gained only by love. And perhaps chief among the gifts of this supremely dowered woman is the quality she possesses of attracting affection. The people's love for her is as worldwide as her fame—a reciprocal love, born of her own love of all created

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things. She has a fine tolerance for the weaknesses, and a warm sympathy for the sorrows, of humanity. She loves her audiences; loves all those rows of white, indistinguishable faces turned up towards her; loves the human soul behind each as a friend, not as a stranger; and somehow, that love, intangible yet potent, beyond the magnetism and charm of her stage-presence, reaches the hearts of her audience, and begets an affection as ardent as their applause. It is an affection, moreover, that is not mere meretricious popularity. The public's love for Clara Butt is a recognition—albeit possibly an unconscious one—of the goodness and beauty that are infused into her work.

To analyse successfully such a personality is impossible. There are no standards to go by. But many have tried, and some are worth quoting.

A writer in the *Sydney Sun*, during her first Australian tour, said of her :

The beautiful voice is one thing . . . but . . . there is "something more exquisite still"! The singing of this great contralto is warm with the life of breathing womanhood—it throbs with the earnestness of one who is a singer by the grace of God. In the work of Clara Butt you recognize the qualities attributed by Swinburne to that of George Eliot—"a genius warmed by the suns of travel, with its gracious union of ease and strength, its fulness and purity of outline, its clearness and accuracy of touch, its wise and tender equity, its radiant and temperate humour, its harmony and sincerity of tone." Of Clara Butt it may be said that, all the difficulties of her art having been overcome, this gloriously gifted woman moves free and unfettered, giving effect to what she designs, in the assured certainty of powers obedient to her will.

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And the London *Daily Express* :

Her secret? It cannot be translated into speech. Behind her glorious voice, and her immense technical skill, lies that personal genius so easy to recognize, yet so difficult to define. She turns everything she touches into spiritual gold.

Mark Allerton said, "Such a voice does not only sing; it preaches, it exhorts, it encourages, it stimulates." And Sir Herbert Tree, in a speech, summed up by saying, "She stands beyond our powers of criticism or definition. There is Nature . . . there is Art . . . and there is Clara Butt!" He was right, and it is wiser not to try to define. Far better to leave analysis alone, and simply take her to our hearts, thanking "whatever gods there be" for so gracious and pleasant a gift.

Of course, as in the case of all 'celebrities,' innumerable stories have been coined concerning Clara Butt's origin. But alas for those romantically inclined persons who love to imagine the 'discovery' of ragged Kreislers and Carusos in the gutter by benevolent old ladies and wealthy old gentlemen, no enraptured patron of the arts found Clara Butt singing *Won't you buy my pretty flowers?* as she offered penny bunches of violets on the Bristol pavements; nor was she discovered carolling *Carmen* at the washtub, or behind the counter of a village shop! No, I am sorry to disappoint them, but she did none of these picturesque things. She came from a nice, cosy, quite ordinary middle-class home, just like the homes of the vast majority of the people who now form her audiences. However, for their consolation it may be recorded that a remote Spanish

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ancestor is probably responsible for Clara Butt's dark eyes and hair; and that her ancestry on her mother's side does include one thoroughly romantic figure—Theodore Hook, one of the most remarkable personalities of the early part of the nineteenth century. Hook has been described as "the Dickens of the middle classes"; but his quite brilliant work as author and dramatist has been rather overshadowed in the minds of posterity by his fame as a practical joker. He is probably best known to history as the author of the "Berners Street hoax," the story of which is worth retelling. There was living in Berners Street a certain rather obnoxious old maiden lady against whom Theodore had a serious grudge. So he sat him down at his desk, day after day, until he had written some thousands of letters (four thousand, according to the current gossip of the day), all purporting to come from the lady's pen. They were addressed to all sorts and conditions of men and women—tradesmen, clergy, dressmakers, doctors, lords, chimney-sweeps, cooks, Members of Parliament, bankers, drapers, and undertakers—and all were invited, upon some pretext or another, to call at the Berners Street house at the same time and date. They came. Dozens of doctors hastened to the same mythical bedside; myriads of servants arrived seeking engagements; messengers delivered cakes, capons, furniture, hats, clothing, horses, wines, and carpets; parsons came to administer extreme unction, and sweeps to clean the flues; the Lord Mayor of London came, the manager of the Bank of England, the chairman of the East India Company, and other

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distinguished folk innumerable—all lured into this absurdity by the audacity of Theodore Hook! The frightful confusion that ensued may be imagined. And whatever was the grudge that Theodore cherished against that unfortunate old lady, he was certainly avenged. On another occasion he made a wager that he would 'score' a lunch off a certain cantankerous old gentleman, well known for the violence of his temper. With two friends he walked calmly into the curmudgeon's riverside garden, and began digging up the velvety turf of the lawn. Out came the proprietor, in a towering rage, to deal with the trespassers as they deserved; whereupon Hook, exercising the full charm of his personality, explained that he and his friends were 'surveyors,' and so convincing a story did he tell that the outraged owner became the courteous host, and the 'surveyors' were entertained to lunch upon the most elaborate of viands and expensive of vintages.

But though Hook was admittedly the prince of practical jokers, it is really scarcely fair that his superlative accomplishments in that direction should blind posterity to his other claims to fame. He wrote many plays for those famous actors Mathews, Liston, and Bannister; and his *Paul Pry*, which was Liston's favourite rôle, was also one of Toole's earliest successes at the Haymarket. He edited *John Bull* and the *New Monthly*, and wrote many books.

For the further benefit of lovers of the romantic, the truthful historian may set down the fact that Clara Butt was the offspring of a runaway marriage! Her mother, Clara Hook (who was Theodore's great-

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granddaughter), fell in love with, and married at the age of sixteen, handsome young Henry Butt, who was employed at her father's shipbuilding-yards at Shoreham, Sussex. She ran away with him to Jersey, the home of his people; and there their first child, Bertie, was born when Mrs Butt was only seventeen. He did not live long; and little Clara was the next arrival. Mr Butt was by now captain of a small sailing-ship—a schooner—in which his young wife used often to accompany him on his voyages, and it was only by the narrowest of margins that Clara escaped the distinction of being born at sea. They were off the Sussex coast, probably (though this is uncertain) on their way to seek a reconciliation with the Hooks, who had never forgiven their youngest daughter's runaway match, when a hasty landing became necessary, and they put in to the nearest port—Southwick, a little fishing-village not far from Brighton. And there, at 4 Adur Terrace, Clara Butt was born.

The dark-eyed baby-girl was duly christened in the old Southwick Parish Church, and her names, Clara Ellen, entered in the register.

Mrs Hook, whose serious illness at this time was probably the reason of her daughter's intended visit to her, had died meanwhile, and the two families were never reconciled. But the eldest Miss Hook, who married Warwick Gray (one of the original 'sentinels'—of whom Richard Temple was another—in Gilbert and Sullivan's *Iolanthe*, and whose portrait hangs in the Savoy Theatre), refused to be cut off from her young sister, and a close friendship endured all their lives.

The Hooks were a large family, and all extremely

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talented. All had good voices, and several were clever mimics, Mrs Butt and Mrs Gray having these two gifts in marked degree. Both could entertain their friends by the hour ; and Mrs Gray formed a Children's Opera Company, which achieved great success. One of Clara's earliest recollections was of seeing this company perform *La Fille de Madame Angot*.

As soon as possible after their daughter's birth Captain and Mrs Butt sailed back to Jersey, where they made their home for the next seven years. And here, through the curiously clear memory of childhood, we get a couple of vivid little pictures of Clara Butt's earliest days.

There is no evidence that she was an infant prodigy (here, alas, is another disappointment for the romantic reader !); but she could certainly sing, and well enough to win an encore. She was playing in the garden one warm summer morning, entertaining an audience of battered dolls with a classic ballad of the period, known as *Tommy make room for your uncle*, when she heard a voice from the next-door garden call out, "That's very nice, little girl—won't you sing again? I'll give you a lovely bunch of grapes if you will." So, of course, the little girl 'obliged,' and was rewarded with a big bunch of luscious fruit, her first fee, and her first encore.

Clara Butt's only other memory of those days is a less pleasant one. Her governess was making her a bathing-dress ; and all day long little Clara had been watching its progress with eyes as eager as those of a dog waiting to be taken for a walk, for when it was finished she was to put it on and have her first bathe in the sea. At last,

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late in the afternoon, the garment was finished and put on; and then, standing on a big rock, the governess threw the little girl into deep water "to teach her to swim." Probably there was no danger; but the memory of the terrible green water, as it closed over her head and roared in her ears, has remained with her all through her life, and may well have been the cause of her never learning to swim, so that she has had several very narrow escapes from drowning. Some strangers standing near noticed what was going on, and reprimanded the wretched governess severely, as she dragged the terrified child from the water.

The Butts moved to Bristol in 1880, and the Captain continued for some time to go to sea. One of his eldest daughter's clearest memories of this period is of a wild, stormy night, soon after the birth of one of her brothers. Captain Butt was at sea, and his wife, as always in bad weather, was very nervous, and had just been receiving rather doubtful consolation from a sympathetic neighbour, who assured her that "rough ashore means calm at sea." The door opened, and Captain Butt unexpectedly arrived. He kissed his wife, warmed his hands at the glowing fire, then turned to his little daughter, saying, "Why, I'm forgetting my little Clara!" when Mrs Butt whipped off the tablecloth she had hastily thrown over the baby's cradle, and displayed a 'surprise'—in the shape of Wilfred Lawson Butt (now a well-known film-actor).

The Butts now moved to 3 Sydney Terrace, Tottenham, where all the children had diphtheria, and Bertie (the second of that name) died. Clara was dangerously



AGED FIVE

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AGED TWO

Photo Elliott and Fry

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ill at the same time, and the two children lay feet to feet, at either end of a big bed. She felt her little brother's feet grow cold when the end came, and the doctor fully expected her to follow Bertie into the other world ; but she fought desperately for life, and coughed and choked and struggled until at last the obstruction that was choking her seemed to be torn away, and she heard the doctor say to her mother, " Now she'll live ! "

About this time Captain Butt left the sea, and went into partnership as a shipbuilder and broker with a Mr Baker. He invested the greater part of his capital in a schooner called the *Crystal*, and sent her to sea with his former mate, Frank Forbes, as skipper. Forbes was a great favourite with the Butts and their children, and was often at the house ; and when he went to sea in the *Crystal* their dog Lulu, a beautiful white collie, went with him for company. The day he came to say good-bye Clara was on the swing in the garden, and seemed curiously loth to let her friend go, calling him back again and again ; and when he had gone she cried all the evening, much to the alarm of her father and mother. She must have had some sort of premonition of disaster. There was a party at the Butts' one evening not long after, and a violin was being played ; Clara, shivering in her nightdress, had broken all regulations by creeping to the top of the stairs to listen. Presently she heard a knock at the front door, and a telegram was handed in. The crisp rustle as her father tore it open came to her ears, then his voice calling her mother, and reading out the curt message, " Schooner *Crystal* lost with all hands." There was no more music that night ;

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and little Clara crept back to bed in utter fright and misery, not quite sure what 'lost' meant, but certain that it could only mean disaster.

Next day there was an air of gloom about the house ; but the news of the *Crystal's* loss was carefully kept from the little girl, largely on account of her beloved dog. And she in her turn could not admit her knowledge, because she could have heard nothing if she had not disobeyed orders by getting out of bed. Here was tragedy indeed. Small wonder that the sensitive child suffered torments over it, and at last made herself really ill. Nor is it surprising that the impression of the misery she endured should have remained even through so eventful a life as hers. So tragic are the sorrows and so poignant the sufferings of a child !

The loss of the *Crystal* was the beginning of a period of ill-fortune for Captain Butt. Being a seafaring man, he was superstitious, and would sometimes ascribe his misfortunes to the breaking of the looking-glass on a big dressing-table, which, a few days before the sinking of the schooner, was blown over and fell through the wide-open window, to be smashed to atoms in the yard below. The loss of his entire capital was a heavy blow, but he carried on manfully, and was able in time to embark upon another venture. This time it was a steam-tug, the *Pendragon*, to which he entrusted his fortunes ; but again luck seemed against him, and, although always out in the river, the little ship never seemed to secure a really good 'haul.' At last she went ashore off the Mumbles, and, for some reason or other, the insurance company concerned refused to meet

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the owner's claims. Captain Butt was the straightest of men, and undoubtedly had right on his side ; but he had neither ' might ' nor money, and he was forced to sell the tug to pay her repair bills. And such is the ' luck of the game ' that no sooner had she changed hands, and gone to Liverpool, than she earned a thousand pounds in a single job. But that was no consolation to her late owner.

CHAPTER II

Schooldays — Early Piano Lessons — Her First Song — A Musical Family — Clara Butt, 'Soprano' — Training with D. W. Rootham — A Member of the Choir — A Schoolgirl's Encouragement

CLARA'S first school, to which she went when she was about eight years old, was the Bath Road Academy, at the bottom of the hill below Sydney Terrace. The headmaster was Mr Atkinson, an elderly man of whom the children were very fond; and Clara dearly loved the old schoolhouse and the big lilac-tree that cast a deep, pleasant shade in front of it. To that tree she traces her lifelong love of lilac and its scent, which never fails to bring back to her fleeting memories of those happy, childish days; and on the rare occasions that she uses perfume it is that of lilac that she chooses.

It was while at the Bath Road school that Clara had her first music lessons; and to Miss Adelaide Fincken (now Mrs George) belongs the unique distinction of having taught England's greatest singer her very first steps in music.

Miss Fincken's father was an old friend of Captain Butt. Meeting him one day, the Captain made the suggestion that Miss Fincken, then a young girl building up a teaching connexion, should give some piano lessons to his eldest little girl. The matter was arranged, Mrs Butt impressing upon Miss Fincken in

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the course of the interview to be "firm with the child at all costs. Do whatever you like, but I *do* want her to get on!"

So Clara arrived at Miss Fincken's for her first lesson—a serious, self-possessed little girl, with the curiously independent air of one who, even at that early age, realized the responsibilities that devolved upon the eldest of the family. She was rather a strange child, dreamy and quiet, with the strong sense of fun which was so marked in her later as yet undeveloped. She was not in the least shy, but very undemonstrative in manner; and she entered upon this first step of her musical career without any noticeable enthusiasm. But then what child ever did otherwise?

There she sat at those early lessons, her dark hair brushed back from her forehead and hanging down behind in a thick plait, her big dark eyes first rising to the printed stave, then falling anxiously to her ink-stained fingers, as she laboriously picked out, one by one, the E, G, B, D, F, or F, A, C, E, to which her teacher's pencil pointed.

As the lessons progressed, little Clara Butt, like any ordinary, perfectly unmusical child, developed an antipathy to scales and *arpeggios*. But when it came to 'pieces' it was quite a different story. She learned them quickly and eagerly, so eagerly, in fact, that she was prone to ignore instructions to get her 'marked' portion perfect before going farther ahead. She was often in trouble on this score, for she very much preferred to spend her practice-time in explorations into the new and undiscovered country of her pieces rather

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than in wearisome repetitions of ten or a dozen bars. And when this happened, Miss Fincken, shaking her head gently in remonstrance, would say, "Oh, Clara dear, you haven't been working a bit. You *must* try to do better next time." And Clara would try—but always with the same result.

After a very short time Clara awoke to a real musical enthusiasm for hymn-tunes. Captain Butt had a strong religious bent; hymns were generally sung in the home on Sundays, and he thought, too, that his daughter should be able to play them later on, at the Bible Christian and other mission services at which he often assisted. Miss Fincken was therefore asked to teach her some, and the simple, sweeping harmonies took the child's fancy at once, so that she never tired of playing them over, humming softly to herself at the same time. One that she learned in this way was *Abide with me*, though it was not then a greater favourite with her than many others.

Miss Fincken sometimes gave Clara her lessons at the Butts' house, and there, one day, an important musical milestone was reached. Mrs Butt brought in one of her own favourite songs (it was Handel's *Angels Ever Bright and Fair*) and, placing it before Miss Fincken, said, "Will you play this? I'd like you to hear Clara try it." So Clara did "try it," and for the first time her teacher heard that strange, sweet voice, not in the least, as it seemed to her, like a child's voice, and unlike any voice, child's or woman's, that she had ever heard. Mrs Butt then suggested that Miss Fincken should teach Clara singing as well as the piano; and Miss Fincken,

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though disclaiming any real knowledge of singing, agreed to help her as best she could, and at any rate to teach her some song-accompaniments. From this time forward Clara often accompanied both her father and mother when they sang, and also sang a number of their songs herself. But no special notice was ever taken of her voice. All the Butt children had good voices, and sang just as naturally as they spoke. Singing was an everyday affair in the house; and the only cause for remark would have been for any child of theirs *not* to have a voice.

After a time Miss Fincken married, and the lessons ceased. But the seed had been sown, and tended for long enough to ensure its growth. From now onward young Clara spent most of her spare time at the piano.

The family made yet another move, to Mida Villa, Coronation Road, and there Clara met with an accident which completely crippled her. One cold winter morning, when the kitchen stove was crowded with breakfast pots and pans, an 'overflow' in the shape of a panful of boiled fish had been brought in to cook on the morning-room fire. Clara was standing in front of it with one of her brothers when he brushed accidentally against the handle and upset the pan, fish, boiling water and all, over poor Clara's feet and legs. Her screams brought her father running to her aid; and in his anxiety to pull off her stocking he tore the scalded flesh, and the inflammation that followed was so serious that for some time it was feared that amputation would be necessary. Happily this was averted; but she was confined to the house, and could

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not be sent to school for over a year, during which time she had lessons at home with a Miss Fox.

The Butts' piano had been bought at the suggestion of Warwick Gray, who, with his wife, had also come to live in Bristol. Ardent musician that he was, he urged Captain Butt to buy a piano "for big Clara," adding, "Little Clara will like it too, by and by." At this piano Warwick Gray, then singing at the Savoy, would often sit down and run through his parts; and "little Clara," never able to resist the lure of music for long, would come up beside him and chime in with any passage that happened to strike her fancy, from bass to high soprano. "Uncle Gray" used to look round over his shoulder at her and say, "Why, what a voice you've got, child!"—but it was more in jest than earnest. That piano is now in Clara's boudoir at Hampstead, and she often practises at it.

Mrs Butt possessed a really beautiful voice, much resembling in quality, though not in range, that of her daughter Clara when in her teens. Owing to her early marriage, she had, of course, had little or no training, but she had naturally good musical taste, and her singing was always very pleasant to listen to. It is of interest that some of her greatest favourites, notably Molloy's *Love's Old Sweet Song*, afterwards became some of Clara's most popular numbers. Captain Butt had also a very pleasing baritone, and his singing was immensely popular among their friends. Thus, though Clara's voice was not considered in any way remarkable, it was in the natural course of things that she should have singing lessons when opportunity offered. As it

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so happened, a next-door neighbour, Miss Brooks, was a teacher of singing, and to her, accordingly, the young girl was sent.

Miss Brooks, unfortunately, was a soprano, and it did not occur to her that her new pupil, whose high notes were as pure as a bell, could possibly be anything else. So she gave her soprano songs, and cultivated her upper register to the entire exclusion of the lower ; and though Clara was not quite happy about it, she had no choice but to bow to authority, and to what purported to be superior wisdom.

It seems strange at first glance that neither Miss Brooks nor Mrs Butt, both singers and lovers of music, should have realized that Clara was a contralto. The explanation lies in the phenomenal compass of her voice. The contraltos of that day—outstanding among whom were Patey and Antoinette Sterling—had really little more than an octave in their voices. But Clara, even as a child, could sing ‘high B’s’ as comfortably as she could ‘low G’s’ ; and, since Miss Brooks herself could sing no higher than her pupil, she fell into the trap, and made the egregious error of classing Clara’s voice as soprano ! Clara, however, had her own private opinion about the matter ; and after having been taken to a concert at the Colston Hall, to hear Belle Cole, she would sit down at the piano when she came home and try whether she could make the same kind of sounds as she did—and she found that she could ! And when she grew a little older she discovered a new and fascinating game ; she would ‘try her voice’ on the passers-by, and, watching them through the window,

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would consider she had scored a point if they stopped to listen. This, as time went on, they often did.

At the age of twelve or thereabouts Clara went to the South Bristol High School, the headmistress of which was Miss Cook. She continued her lessons with Miss Brooks, but she was a self-contained child, and spoke to no one about her music. So it was not until Miss Cook happened to call upon Mrs Butt one afternoon, while Clara was at her favourite diversion of practising 'low notes' in the back room, that the schoolmistress ever knew that her pupil sang at all. By way, no doubt, of making polite conversation, Miss Cook presently remarked to her hostess, "What a very nice voice your boy has!" "Boy?" exclaimed Mrs Butt, laughing, "that's not a boy; that's Clara, your own pupil!" and proceeded to explain how the said Clara was really a soprano, but that she would insist on trying to sing these deep contralto notes to amuse herself.

To her eternal credit, Miss Cook cast grave doubt upon the 'soprano' theory; and she persuaded Mrs Butt to let Mr Dan Rootham—then the leading teacher of singing in the West of England—hear Clara sing.

Mrs Butt did so, of course, and from that moment Clara Butt's real training began. Raw and crude though it then was, Mr Rootham recognized that this big, unmanageable voice, with its sweet tone and enormous compass, had potentialities altogether out of the ordinary. "You have gold in your throat, my child," he said, and no man ever proved a better prophet.

Mr Rootham was organist of St Peter's Church, conductor of the Bristol Festival Choir, an accomplished

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musician, and a thoroughly sound teacher. He had a good bass voice, and up to the time of his death—at nearly eighty—he remained a fine singer. Clara Butt could not have fallen into safer hands, and the years that she spent training with him are among her happiest memories. She became a member of the Festival Choir, and sang with them in the 1887 Festival, at which Brahms' *Requiem* and Gounod's *Mors et Vita* were among the works performed, as well as the more familiar *Messiah* and *Elijah*. The soloists included Mary McIntyre, Nordica, and George Henschel. The experience Clara Butt thus gained was invaluable, and gave her a knowledge and realization of "the choir behind the soloist" by which she profited richly when the time came for her to take her place as soloist in front of that very choir.

There followed three happy years of study; and, imperceptibly, the child began to develop into the singer. Music, especially singing, counted more and more with her. She loved concerts, and regarded almost with worship the artists she heard at them. Wondrous beings, they seemed, who floated down in trailing clouds of glory from another world, to the platform whence they entranced ordinary flesh-and-blood mortals like herself! Yet, curiously enough, despite a love of singing so great that she simply *had* to sing, it never occurred to her to put herself in their place, nor was she conscious of any definite desire to be a great singer. The stage had no glamour for her, and the idea of fame never entered her head. It was not until much later on that she entertained the modest hope that by and by

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she might be able to earn a little with her voice, and so help the family fortunes.

The girls at the High School were much excited when they heard that Clara was to sing to the great Mr Rootham. They clustered round her when she came to school next day, and bombarded her with questions. Why ever hadn't she told them she had a voice? What sort of a voice was it? Had Miss Cook really taken it for a boy's? And would she sing to them in the school-room after lessons?

So she sang them *O rest in the Lord*, already a well-beloved song of hers, and it was some simple word or two, said to her afterwards by a quiet girl called Edith Adams, that first brought faintly home to her the power over the emotions of others that a singer may possess.

CHAPTER III

Youthful 'Appearances'—Bible Christian and Temperance Meetings
—A Clever Accompanist—The "Pill-box"—Sad End of a
Best Frock—Saving a Friend's Life—Picnics and an Experiment

AS time went on Clara sang often at her mother's parties, and began to be pressed into service at the Bible Christian and other meetings and missions at which Captain Butt was an indefatigable worker. So that her first audiences consisted largely of prim ladies of uncertain age, arrayed in hats and garments fairly redolent of virtue and good works, and rather smug gentlemen in decent black broadcloth. But she sang her young heart out to them just the same—the great soul in embryo struggled into expression through the great voice in embryo—and the strange, intangible power that was to be hers began to make itself felt—though it is not likely that any of those early audiences of hers ever realized that it was anything more than the youthful charm of a long-legged lassie with a sweet voice.

But whatever it was, she grew to be in ever greater request by the promoters of mission services, temperance meetings, parish concerts, and the like. Pale young curates, dear old ladies, churchwardens, district visitors, and Sunday-school teachers put their heads together as they arranged the next "Pleasant Sunday Afternoon" (or whatever it might be), and sooner or later some one would suggest that they should get

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“that tall girl with the dark hair—Captain Butt’s child, wasn’t she?—that Mrs Jones liked so much at the Mothers’ Meeting,” to sing something “while the collection was being taken”!

It was at one of these functions—a temperance meeting at Redcliffe Crescent Chapel, New Cut—that Clara first met Alice Jenkins, the clever accompanist who was so closely associated with the beginnings of her musical life. She sang her first song to the accompaniment of a Miss Marshall; and then, having made the acquaintance of Miss Jenkins in the interval, and heard her exceptionally skilled and sympathetic playing, she asked if she would accompany her next song, which was Cowen’s *Light in Darkness*.

The two girls exchanged addresses, and next morning Clara (attired in a somewhat flamboyant frock garnished with a tartan pattern about a foot square!) appeared at the door of Dean Lodge, her new friend’s home, with a huge portfolio of music under her arm, asking if Miss Alice Jenkins lived there. From that time forward Alice played for her constantly, both in public and private, and she retains a vivid memory of the huge, lovely, and, at that time, rather unmanageable voice, and of the tall girl, “all arms and legs,” as she stood facing her often rather stodgy audiences, with her singularly winning smile, and a “sort of half-awkward grace, or half-graceful awkwardness.”

During the whole time that her friend was taught by Mr Rootham, Alice studied her songs just as hard as did the singer herself. And it was with her that the dramatic rendering of the *Enchantress*—which eventually

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won for Clara Butt the Open Scholarship at the Royal College of Music—was worked and polished up. Even after the new scholar had gone to London the faithful Alice still played for her in the holidays, and at any concerts she gave in Bristol. And both *Orpheus* and *The Golden Legend*, in which Clara was to make her sensational first London appearances, were studied to 'concert pitch' by the two girls during the vacation preceding the performances.

There is probably not a church or a chapel or a hall in the whole of the Bristol district in which young Clara did not sing at one time or another during those three years before she won her scholarship. There were all sorts of amusing incidents, of course. On one occasion she had the experience—all too familiar, alas, to many singers, but to a Clara Butt surely unique—of singing to all but empty benches. It was at a mission concert held in a tent at Redfield; singer and accompanist came on to the platform to face a huge cold and draughty space, and row upon row of hideous empty wooden benches, graced only by a few human derelicts—who appeared merely to have drifted in either for lack of something better to do, or for shelter from the cheerless weather. However, Clara bravely tackled her song, while Alice, with equal, or even greater, pluck, tackled its accompaniment on an ugly, gimcrack little light-wood piano, whose appearance was only a little less repellent than its discordant, jingling tone. The audience, such as it was, seemed as utterly dispirited as the performers; and the singer's excusable comment on going off, was, "Well, that *is* the limit!

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That's what comes of singing for Father's blessed missions!"

A very characteristic incident occurred at one of these youthful appearances, at the Bedminster Town Hall. She was singing her own and her mother's favourite, *Love's Old Sweet Song*, which opens with the words:

Once in the dear dead days beyond recall
When on the world the mists began to fall,

and in one of those agonizing moments of mental lapse to which most of us are occasionally prone, Clara had reversed the nouns, and sang:

When on the mists the world began to fall!

She realized in an instant what she had done, and, being far too conscientious to allow so silly a line to pass (even in those days words were as important as notes to Clara Butt), she stopped, said to her accompanist, "Let's start again," and did so, winning a most insistent encore at the end of her song. Now "Encore" in those days was, far more often than now, taken literally as a request to repeat the same song; but Clara didn't want to sing that particular song again, feeling rather embarrassed over what had happened in the first line. She was uncertain what to do; and so, simple and unself-conscious child that she was, she looked down into the audience, to where her mother and Alice Jenkins (who happened not to be playing for her friend on this occasion) were sitting a few rows back, and asked, "What shall I sing, Mother?" Unfortunately Mrs Butt had not her daughter's happy lack of self-consciousness; she turned scarlet, and bent her head



AGED FOURTEEN

Photo F. T. J. Morris

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to hide her confusion, refusing to answer poor Clara's innocent question. Alice, for her part, gave vent to a loud guffaw of laughter, and the audience, delighted with the whole incident, went on applauding louder than ever. She sang the same song at her mother's and father's silver-wedding party, and at her own silver-wedding concert at Bristol in 1925, and recalled the incident afterwards at supper, at which her mother, Alice Jenkins (now Mrs Willie), and several others of the Bedminster audience were present.

Another ludicrous moment was also at Bedminster, when, as she turned to leave the platform after a song, the heel came off her shoe and lay stranded in the middle of the stage. Clara stumbled, recovered herself, and then, not in the least disconcerted, whirled round, pounced upon the derelict, grinned cheerily at the audience, and departed heel in hand, amid appreciative roars of laughter.

At one of the concerts at which she appeared during this period Clara Butt learned a lesson that has been of value to her all her life. Always emotional, she became so affected by her song, that she found herself—to use her own words—“red-eyed and snivelling,” with her voice noticeably affected by the tears that she could not repress. Till now she had rather thought it the proper thing to be ‘worked up’ when singing; but this experience brought home to her the lesson that the singer must control emotion, not be controlled by it, if it is to be conveyed to others.

Clara and Alice used to go to these concerts, supported and chaperoned by their respective mothers, in

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a little, old-fashioned, one-horse brougham, christened by Clara "the pill-box." It was very stuffy, and very small, and there hung about it always a faint, all-pervading smell of straw and slightly damp upholstery. The two mothers always occupied the larger seat, facing the horses, while the girls tucked themselves in with their best frocks and their portfolios as best they could on the narrow one opposite. As her local popularity increased, Clara's engagements became more important, until at last, when she was about sixteen, she attained the honour of an appearance at the Bristol Saturday 'Pops,' for which she was to receive a fee of two guineas. She had a smart new red satin evening frock for the event, made in Empire fashion; and she felt that whatever happened she had no cause to feel any anxiety over her appearance. The "pill-box" was at the door when Clara, all ready dressed, went back into the morning-room where they had been having 'high-tea.' There were some fine, fat, juicy tomatoes on the table; and, remembering that some one had said that tomatoes were good for the throat, she picked up a couple and slipped them into her cloak pocket. But, alas, she had reckoned without the "pill-box"! That modest vehicle was never designed to accommodate hot-house fruit in addition to four by no means under-sized persons. So Clara sat on the tomatoes. And the area of her new satin frock over which they managed to spread themselves seemed to her to be out of all proportion to their original size. There was only one drop of sweetness in her cup of woe—the dress was red. It was, however, utterly ruined. And whatever her sing-

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ing may have been that night, her 'appearance,' in her own eyes at least, was an utter fiasco. Worst of all, she got no sympathy—only a severe 'wiggling' from her mother for her carelessness.

The voice that was destined later to fill with consummate ease such huge buildings as the Crystal Palace and the Albert Hall, and to soar triumphantly above the combined voices of thousands in Hyde Park on Empire Day, needed space even in those days, and was apt to be somewhat of an embarrassment to its owner when she sang in an ordinary room. Often, when practising with Alice Jenkins at Dean Lodge, Clara would say, "I simply can't sing in this room to-day," and would sit and sing on the stairs, while, with the door wide open, Alice played her accompaniments on the piano inside. Here one day, just before she went to the Royal College of Music, she was turning over some 'Boosey' and 'Chappell' ballads as they lay on the piano, and remarked, laughing, as she pointed to the lists of songs and their singers, "I wonder if I'll ever see *my* name on a song like that." "You bet you will," replied the faithful Alice (or words to that effect); "it'll be on thousands." Clara shook her head, and remained modestly dubious.

An early evidence of "the power behind the voice" was displayed about this time. Alice Jenkins fell very ill, and all hope of her recovery was given up. She was lying unconscious, and Clara, lonely and broken-hearted, expecting every moment to hear that the end had come, wandered forlornly outside, oppressed by an awful sense of helplessness. The house seemed to her

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already like a house of the dead, so terribly quiet and still it was ; but suddenly, driven by some force that she could neither comprehend nor withstand, she felt that she could reach her lost friend if only she might sing to her. She crept in through the garden to the room where they had so often practised together, and opened a book of songs at random, at *Cleansing Fires*. The song was strange to her ; but as she read the words she felt their appropriateness, and she began to sing, softly at first, and then more and more confidently as her mind took hold of the music, until her voice rang out triumphantly, over and over again in the refrain :

Beat on, true heart, for ever,
Shine bright, strong golden chain ;
And bless the cleansing fires,
And the furnace of living pain.

Strangely comforted, she crept away as quietly as she had come ; to learn later that her voice had pierced her friend's unconsciousness and that she had rallied from that moment. Alice recovered ; and she believes, as did all those who tended her in her illness, that it was only Clara's voice that called her back across the borderland of the world of shadows.

These were times when there were still a few fine days in an English summer, and the Butts and their circle of young people delighted in picnics and out-of-door jaunts. A favourite trip was by coach-and-four through the Brockley Coombe woods to Clevedon, where they used to have lunch or tea at the Pier Hotel. Here there was a long room with a piano at one end, where Clara and her mother once played a neat trick

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on their friends. Clara was at the piano, singing and playing, with her mother sitting beside her. She sang one song after another, her friends calling out, "Go on, Clara, sing another one," after each. She sang the first verse of *Love's Old Sweet Song*, then whispered quickly to her mother, "Now you sing!"—and Mrs Butt sang the second verse and no one knew the difference. Their voices at that time were remarkably alike; and—who knows?—if it had not been for her romantic love-match, perhaps Clara Hook, and not Clara Butt, might have made a worldwide reputation.

CHAPTER IV

A Preliminary Examination—Musical Rivalries—The Open Scholarship—A Dramatic Scene—Bristol's Farewell to the Winner

TIME passed, and Clara was now sixteen. As her voice developed, Mr Rootham became more and more convinced of its possibilities, and felt certain that she had a future before her. The Open Scholarship at the Royal College of Music—the most valuable and coveted prize offered by the institution, open to all instrumentalists and vocalists, the benefits of which provided maintenance as well as free tuition at the College—was to be contested the following year. Mr Rootham wrote to Sir George Grove, principal of the R.C.M., telling him that he had among his pupils a contralto whom he believed would prove a worthy successor to Madame Patey, and that he would like to enter her for the scholarship. Clara Butt's name was accordingly set down, and she went up for the preliminary examination in Bristol.

Among the adjudicators at this examination was Mr George Riseley, organist at Colston Hall, and a somewhat bitter professional rival of Mr Rootham. He had shown this bitterness to Mr Rootham's 'star' pupil on several occasions, notably when she was engaged to sing at her first Saturday 'Pop.' She had been sent to his house to rehearse, and, after first snubbing her severely for arriving not too late, but too early, he sat down and played her songs. At the end he made no comment, but inquired acidly, "What do you call

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your voice?" Clara replied, not unnaturally, in the same tone, that she would have thought *he* ought to know that! Whereupon he admitted grudgingly, "Well, I *suppose* you'd call it a contralto!"

So, on the whole, perhaps it is not surprising that Clara's lot as an examinee at his hands was not a happy one. He insisted on making her read, as tests of "general education," long, difficult passages of English prose, which might well be expected to baffle any young girl of her age. However, her voice pulled her through, and she was entered for the final examination to be held in London in the following January.

The papers were duly filled in, despite some opposition from Mrs Butt, who, for some reason, was not in favour of her daughter studying music seriously. However, Clara had warm encouragement and support from her father, and it was he who took her up to town—it was her first visit to London—on the day preceding the final scholarship examination. They stayed the night with a sister of Captain Butt's at St John's, Lewisham, and came up by train next day, through the bitter cold of a damp, foggy, winter morning, to keep their appointment at ten o'clock at the College. They had a narrow escape from missing that appointment, and keeping one at a hospital instead. For, by way of giving Clara a "real London experience," Captain Butt took a hansom from Victoria to Kensington, and the horse fell down in the slippery, slushy, half-melted snow. Luckily they escaped with a nasty shaking, and arrived at last, to be ushered into the waiting-room with the other candidates.

The Royal College of Music of those days was tucked

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away in a quiet corner of the broad terrace behind the Royal Albert Hall. And it was there, under the shadow of the huge building upon whose stage she was destined to become such a familiar and triumphant figure, that Clara Butt, all unconscious of what lay hidden in the future, came shyly to break her first lance with Fate.

The candidates were heard in alphabetical order, so Clara Butt had not long to wait before her name was called. She came so early on the list, in fact, that several of the examiners, loth, no doubt, to leave their warm beds on so miserable a morning, had not yet arrived. But most of the leading professors of the College, headed by the Principal, sat awaiting the candidates in the front room of the building—a little group of keen musicians wondering, no doubt, whether in any of the motley crowd that would pass before them that day—fat and thin, tall and short, smiling and scowling, robust and anæmic, pianists, 'cellists, violinists, and singers—there might glow a spark of the true fire, worthy to be fanned into flame by a College scholarship.

They had not long to wait. The door opened to admit a tall and striking girl, with (to quote Mr Visetti—now, alas, the only survivor of that day's examiners) "a most interesting face." Her personality arrested attention from the moment she entered the room. She was feeling, had they only known it, wretchedly awkward and conscious of her height, but she hid her feelings successfully behind a wonderfully self-possessed manner, as she stood there, with head held high, before the arbiters of her destiny. Sir Walter Parratt would often recall the scene in after years, and Mr Visetti says of it :

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I remember as if it were yesterday how she came into the room. I was struck at once with her splendid height and fine carriage, and thought, if only she had a voice to match, how magnificent she would look on the stage. Her face, too, interested me greatly, with its air of intelligence, and play of expression, and I could feel her personality even before she began to sing. And when she did . . . well . . . it was simply astounding . . . and I knew that even in its immature state it was the most beautiful contralto voice I had ever heard in all my long experience.

After her entrance Clara Butt and her judges confronted one another for a few minutes in silence. Then one of them, looking down at his list, and up again at the candidate, said, "Miss C. E. Butt? Yes? What are you going to sing to us?" To which she replied, rather huskily, in her deep voice, "The *Enchantress*." Then she set it on the piano before the accompanist, and began to sing.

The scene that followed was an odd one. The effect of that voice, bursting without warning into the dramatic octave leap with which Hatton's famous song opens, was so utterly electrifying—terrifying, almost—in that resonant room that it rendered the astonished examiners more or less hysterical. Gone was the placid anticipation of a few moments earlier. Nor did they care that the luncheon-hour was as yet afar off. They stared, waved their arms, jumped to their feet, and walked about the room, talking at the top of their voices, almost shouting to one another in their excitement. And the more they talked and gesticulated, the louder sang "Miss C. E. Butt," growing more astonished and angry every moment, for she could think of no other

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reason for the examiners' behaviour than that they were laughing at her. The climax came at the end of the first verse. She had worked herself up into a frenzy of rage. Funny, was she? Well, if she was, that was no reason why these wretched old men should be rude to her! Funny, eh? *She'd* show them! And she fairly hurled her great voice at them with the lines:

Kings have trembled when I came,
Reading doom upon my face!

letting the last deep E natural boom at them like a passing-bell. As she said of it afterwards, "I don't know about the kings, but those examiners certainly 'trembled.' I meant them to!"

There was a queer silence in the room when the last note had died away. Clara was still excited and angry, and her dark eyes, sombre with smouldering wrath, looked from one to the other of the examiners for the traces of the unkind amusement she suspected them of harbouring, either on account of her voice, her performance, or her personal appearance. There was no sign of it, however, though a good deal of whispering and discussion in agitated undertones was still going on. At last one looked up and said, "Er—Miss—er—Butt, could you sing us something rather quieter—something out of the *Elijah*—eh?" Miss Butt had no *Elijah* with her, but said, rather crossly, that she could sing any of the solos from it if, as she supposed, there was a copy in the College. A hurried search was made, but no copy of the work could be found, for the library (as usual!) was locked. So Miss Butt, ruffled and

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reckless, for she was convinced from the examiners' manner that she had not the faintest chance of winning the scholarship, said contemptuously, "Well, surely one of you gentlemen can play *O rest in the Lord* from memory?" None of them seemed at all eager to try, but at last Dr Parratt consented to play *Woe unto them*, and she sang the lovely air to his accompaniment.

As she finished, Clara saw a strange thing—a tear splashed down on the Principal's boot, and a queer little feeling of satisfaction came to her in the midst of all her disappointment and anger. Comical and a failure though she might be, she could still make one of these men feel. "Well, now you *have* got something 'quieter,'" she said to them under her breath, and decided that there must be something rather nice about old Sir George after all.

Then, with a perfunctory, "That will do, Miss Butt," the ordeal was over, and the Bristol candidate found herself outside the door, with all her bright hopes dashed to the ground. But she was not the only candidate in despair. As she went out she passed another singing candidate, who had been listening to her through the door, and saw that she was crying bitterly. Probably she had realized that her voice could have no chance against Clara's. But Clara knew nothing of that, and the other girl's tears brought her no consolation. A dreadful 'flat' feeling of reaction overtook her, after the excitement and anger of the scene in the examination-room. Utterly miserable, and, it must be confessed, a little tearful, she wandered along the passages, and sat down in a dark corner near

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the office, leaving her father, who was much interested in watching and listening to the other candidates.

She had been there for some time, too dispirited to think of lunch; too dejected, even, to join the other candidates in the waiting-room, when a College official (Mr Aveling) came along, and was hailed by another (Mr Hayles) inside the office. "Hallo," called Mr Hayles. "How are the scholarships going?" "The Open one has gone," was the reply. "Who's got it?" "Oh, a great tall girl, a singer. I forget the name." And the messenger of Fate passed on his way.

The "great tall girl," who was furtively wiping her eyes in the corner, sat up suddenly. Was it possible? No! It couldn't be, after the extraordinary way those examiners had behaved! But, all the same, she got up, went into the waiting-room, and had a good look at all the other candidates. There were girls of all sorts and sizes, but there certainly wasn't a single one who by any stretch of imagination could be described as a "great tall girl." None of them looked more than about five feet—when she was about! So she *had* got it! Another reaction set in—a joyous, irresponsible one this time. No more moping in dark corners now. Up the tall girl jumped, her mercurial spirits as near to boiling-point as they had been to zero a moment before, and walked boldly into the office. Could they kindly tell her if she would be wanted again, as she and her father had to catch a train back to Bristol?

Mr Hayles went off to make inquiries. Yes. She was to be heard again—in the concert-hall this time—at two o'clock. So off dashed Clara, all her troubles forgotten, and, having suddenly discovered that she

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was very hungry, collected her father from his post near the examination-room, and dragged him off to lunch. At which meal, blissfully oblivious to the fact that she had to sing again immediately afterwards, she insisted on ordering all the most unsuitable things she could think of, including boiled mutton and apple dumplings, and made a very good meal of them too!

At two o'clock punctually she presented herself in the College concert-hall. There was a much bigger muster of professors this time, and when she had sung the *Enchantress* again they gathered round her, telling her definitely that they had awarded her the scholarship, and congratulating her warmly upon her voice. "And now, wouldn't you like to tell my daddy?" said the blushing new scholar; so Captain Butt was called in to join in the good wishes. The happy father and daughter departed at last to catch the afternoon train to Bristol, stopping on their way to wire the good news to Mrs Butt.

The warmest interest was shown on all sides by the people of Bristol in her successful candidature. And when the time approached for her to leave for London her friends arranged a farewell concert in her honour at the Tyndale Lecture Hall, and collected two purses of gold (one of which contained a cheque for sixty pounds) from her friends at Bedminster and Clifton. These, with a set of specially bound copies of the English poets, were presented to her at the concert, where, in an atmosphere of pride and affection, and high hopes for the future, Clara Butt for the first time in her life found herself the centre of attention, and stood on a platform banked with flowers, in a hall decorated in her honour.

CHAPTER V

Arrival at College—Alexandra House—Henry Blower and other Professors—The Princess of Wales *incog.*—The Morley Scholarship—The Gem well hidden—An Albert Hall Audition—A Flutter in College Dovecotes

THE Open Scholarship was contested early in January 1890. It might not be taken up, however, until the winner was seventeen years old; so Clara Butt, whose seventeenth birthday was not until February, did not enter the College until the following summer term.

She was to live at Alexandra House, Kensington Gore, which had been founded a few years earlier, in order to provide a comfortable home in London for girl art and music students from the country. The idea—originated by Sir George Grove, Principal and Director of the Royal College of Music, Sir Philip Owen, Director of the South Kensington Museum, and others interested in British art—had been taken up with enthusiasm by the Princess (Alexandra) of Wales. And on her wish to found the house being made public, the necessary cash—some £85,000—was provided by Mr Francis Cook, whose munificence was rewarded with a knighthood. The house stands next door to the old College of Music, behind the Albert Hall, and is a pleasant place, with its bedrooms arranged in pairs, each pair leading off a sitting-room shared by two girls. None of these ‘twin’ rooms happened to be

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empty when Clara arrived, and she was put in the "Top Room," a dormitory for four, which she shared with two Australians and a Welsh girl. One of the Australians was Adelaide Porter, afterwards Mrs Fox, and now Mrs Robertson of Perth, W.A., whose son "John Juan" and his wife, a clever pair of dancers, were recently introduced by his mother's old College friend to Sir Oswald Stoll, as a result of which they appeared successfully at the Coliseum. The other was Jessie Mitchell, now Mrs Sleeman, of Portland, Victoria. The party was completed by Gwendolin Toms, a tiny Welsh girl, who used to go about with her arm round her tall friend, thereby earning the nickname of "the ivy round the water-butt." All three were piano students.

The new scholar rose early on the first morning after her arrival, and made her way to the practising-rooms to try her voice before breakfast. And soon there rang out through the tightly closed 'sound-proof' door a voice which attracted a highly critical audience to the passage outside. One after another, on their way to practice or breakfast, stopped to listen and inquire, "Who on *earth* is that?" They gathered somehow that it was "that big new girl from Bristol," who came down to breakfast a little later to meet the stares and smiles and whispered asides that are the inevitable fate—feminine human nature being what it is—of new girls all the world over. And it is probable that the new scholar had even more than her fair ration, owing to her extreme height, and to the whispers that had already reached her fellow-students concerning her voice.

She soon shook off her first feeling of strangeness,

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and recovered her normal poise. She was full of health and high spirits, and loved to rampage along the draughty passages and up and down the echoing stairs, laughing and shouting from sheer happiness and exuberance. Possibly her fellow-students thought she could not possibly fail to 'put on side' about her scholarship and her voice; and many of them (though her room-mates were her firm friends from the first) snubbed the poor "big Bristol girl" unmercifully, and sent her to Coventry in that curiously 'catty' way that girls know so well. But she never showed the slightest sign of rancour, and carried on as cheerfully as ever, mothering younger girls and homesick ones, and gradually wearing down unfriendliness with sheer good nature. One of Clara's persecutors, who afterwards became a firm friend, was Jessie Rankin, a contralto. Her special delight was to lie in wait unseen for Clara on stairways and round corners, and burlesque her voice with a loud "O-o-o-o-o." But she soon abandoned irritant tactics, owned up, and was good sport enough to tell the tale against herself.

One of the last to be won over was Ella Walker—known as "Elegant Ella"—who sat among the *élite* of the house at the "Beautiful Table." Clara had 'obliged' these exquisites by playing a man's part in some theatricals, and had impressed them by her complete unconsciousness of her success in the part. "There's not a scrap of side on her, and she's the nicest girl I know!" was the verdict of Elegant Ella; and what Elegant Ella said to-day the Beautiful Table echoed to-morrow. So the walls of Jericho had fallen.

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Clara had conquered her enemies by making them her friends.

Among other friends of those College days were Pattie Hughes, a mezzo-soprano who appeared as a duettist with Jessie Rankin, and afterwards married F. A. Sewell, the accompanist; Clare Robinson, a Tasmanian girl, now Mrs Moreley, of Perth, W.A.; Toto Howell, now Mrs Green-Armytage, of Bath; Gussie Guest, Ethel Hitchcock, Ruth Eldridge, Beatrice Baxter; and Maggie Purvis, who played Eurydice to Clara Butt's Orpheus. Among all her friends, as time went on, there was an unending competition to serve her by making her bed or 'tidying up' her room. For it has to be confessed that tidiness was never one of Clara Butt's outstanding virtues. But kindness was. She took new girls under her wing, and was the repository of all the girlish sorrows and confidences in the house.

Those were happy days. There was plenty of work, of course. But what singer—least of all one to whom, as to Clara Butt, singing was becoming the very breath of life—ever found singing a drudgery? There had been keen competition among the professors of singing, who all wanted to add the sensational young Bristol scholar to their respective classes. Mr Visetti, indeed, had fought down the Council's preference for an instrumentalist, or failing that a tenor—in her favour. But he did not get her as a pupil, after all. Mr Henry Blower, then a comparatively junior member of the staff, had been promised the next vocal scholar; and, though he had never seen or heard Clara Butt, he held

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the College authorities strictly to their undertaking, and claimed her as his pupil. In vain did Visetti and Randegger try to put him off by telling him that "she certainly had a voice, but from what they'd seen of her at the scholarship she had the most awful temper," and he would be well rid of her. "Henry" merely listened with a bland smile, and reiterated his claim, remarking, "That's all right. I don't mind her temper. Give me the girl with spirit, any day!" And as "the girl with spirit," Clara was long known in the professors' common-room.

Henry Blower gained his point, to the advantage of both professor and pupil. He was an enthusiast, a clever teacher, and a high-principled gentleman. He had, too, an understanding of his pupil's qualities of heart and mind, as well as of voice. Of the technical side of singing he taught her much. But there came a time when, perhaps unconsciously, he bowed to the born artist in her, and used to accept her 'reading' of a new song, marking in for her with his blue pencil, after she had sung the song to him, the very light and shade and expression that she had just used, much to the entertainment of the other pupils in the room.

Clara Butt's second study was the piano, and she had lessons with Mr Marmaduke Barton. Her early prejudices against scales and *arpeggios* had very little abated, and beyond the accompaniments of her own songs she did not study very seriously. She attended Dr Parratt's famous "music class," in which that brilliant and eccentric professor used to pour out such a wealth of miscellaneous musical knowledge that few

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of his students did not retain and enjoy at least some of it. But unfortunately he possessed a somewhat over-caustic wit, and was prone to indulge in personalities at his pupils' expense, from which Clara suffered with the rest. Bitter indeed was the fate of the late-comer at his hands! His sharp tongue brought tears to the eyes of many a sensitive student as they stole in on tiptoe, hoping—but always in vain—to escape notice. And many and many a time did Clara rush headlong up the stairs just after she had been released from some other class, and then pause breathless in the doorway, wondering what new witticism was about to raise a titter at her expense.

When College work was over for the day life flowed on merrily at Alexandra House. The superintendent, Miss Maria Palmer (known familiarly to her girls as "Mixed Pickles" or "Maria"), was a very popular head, and held the reins with admirable tact. She early discovered the 'devotional' qualities of the new girl's voice, and exercised her right as house-matron by appropriating it to her own uses. She believed in "grace before meat"; and before every meal (for which Clara was almost invariably late) she would rise, hands crossed, and say impressively, "Now, young ladies, we will wait to commence until Miss Butt comes to sing grace for us." Miss Butt on her arrival, more or less breathless, would sing, *For these and all Thy mercies given*, and the meal would commence. This grace, by the way, was an arrangement specially written for the girls by Mr W. H. Squire.

The girls were encouraged to play the hostess in

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their quarters, and parties were very popular. To these, owing to the exigencies of the hostesses' accommodation and equipment, the guests were bidden to "bring your own chair or pillow" and "your cup or glass." As many as forty girls would assemble in one of those tiny sitting-rooms, sometimes in fancy dress, the six-foot Clara once appearing as a 'baby,' in a long white nightie and broad pink sash. These parties generally broke up with a toast—honoured in cocoa or lemonade—to "Alexandra and the Cooks," this being intended as a delicate tribute to the founders of the house.

Clara was an enthusiastic attendant at the gym and dancing classes held by Miss Snell. Many dances, too, were given in that gymnasium. It was there that Clara gave her twenty-first-birthday party, to which there came up from Bristol her mother and Alice Jenkins. At another of her parties she presided as 'host' in her brother's evening suit, and 'sat out' with several charming girls on the stairs. It was a favourite and unfailingly successful joke of hers to dress up as a man, and wait for the girls, hailing them softly in her deep voice, and perhaps stealing a sly kiss unawares. Many were the blushes and struggles and startled shrieks she delightedly scored in this way, especially from new girls not yet aware that they had among them a very creditable descendant of Theodore Hook.

The sponsor and patroness of Alexandra House, the Princess of Wales, was very fond of paying it informal visits. The only notice that would be received was a telephone message that her carriage had left



AGED TWENTY-ONE

Photo Window and Grove

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Marlborough House and might be expected at any moment. It was understood on these occasions that the Princess would take tea in the girls' room which happened to be the tidiest and best kept. Once, and once only, did Clara Butt score this honour! By this time she had been moved into one of the 'twin' rooms, as the stairs to the top dormitory affected her heart.

The royal visitor soon came to know and love Clara's voice, for Clara often practised in the concert-hall to give that voice more 'room,' and the Princess would go in and listen to her—caught unawares with her old College frock and untidy hair—from a front seat, saying quietly, "Go on, never mind me." This happened once or twice, and ever after, when the Princess came, Clara was sent for to sing to her. It happened once that her Royal Highness came in quite unexpectedly when Clara was in the hall singing Schubert's *Maiden's Lament*. The Princess was in deep mourning for her son, the Duke of Clarence, who had recently died. She was looking very sad, and Clara stopped, thinking that the appropriateness of the song might add to the Royal lady's sorrow; but she motioned to her to continue, and afterwards thanked her.

The Princess of Wales' love for Clara Butt's voice did not end with College days, and she made a point of asking her to sing whenever and wherever they met. She never missed an opportunity, and it became a sort of joke between them. So much so that when, long afterwards, she met her in a shop in Baker Street, she insisted upon her singing even there!

After she had been at College for some time Clara

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was awarded a further scholarship—the “Morley,” a most coveted prize. Although its provisions demanded only one year of such seclusion, the College authorities were most rigorous in their refusal to allow her to make any public appearance until well on into her third year. The only exception they made was in favour of her home city, Bristol, where she was allowed to give several concerts (for the purpose of raising pocket-money) and to make other public appearances. At these her popularity grew ever greater, but her success was entirely local, and no rumours of her powers seem to have leaked out into the greater musical world. She was not allowed to sing even at a College concert, so jealous were the Council of the gem they were polishing. And it was not until one Sunday afternoon in her third year that events began to move.

She had gone across with a party of other girls from Alexandra House to the Albert Hall to hear a former fellow-student who was singing at the organ-recital. Waiting for her in the artists' room afterwards, Clara was addressed by Sir Joseph Barnby, who came across to the group and asked, “Are you the girl with the big voice?” Her friends, of course, gave Clara away, and Sir Joseph told her that he was holding an audition on the following Tuesday morning at ten o'clock, and would like her to come and sing to him. She agreed, naturally delighted, but a little frightened of what the attitude of the College authorities might be, in view of their elaborate precautions. So she decided to emulate Brer Rabbit, and say nothing. She chose Sullivan's *God shall wipe away all tears*, and set off at the

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appointed hour on Tuesday morning to sing it at the Albert Hall audition. But just as she was crossing the terrace from Alexandra House, who should come tearing round the corner in a hansom but Henry Blower on his way to his morning's work at College. He saw her, jumped out, and cried, "Where are you going, my girl?" There was nothing for it but to tell him, and she did so, expecting a storm. But the storm did not break. The professor looked thoughtful for a moment, then smiled, and said, "Bravo! I'll come and play for you. What are you going to sing?" And off they went to the audition together.

Beyond remarking that she had "a beautiful voice," Sir Joseph said very little to Clara when she had finished. But he took Mr Blower aside and talked with him at some length. Clara returned to the house feeling rather worried, for in spite of Mr Blower's support she knew that she would have to face the College Council. And, sure enough, when she came up from lunch there was a note in the letter-rack requesting her presence in the council-room. But that was not the only letter addressed to her. There was another from Sir Joseph Barnby, offering her three engagements with the Royal Choral Society, to sing the contralto solos in *The Golden Legend*, *Israel in Egypt*, and *Elijah*, at five guineas for each appearance.

Clara took the two letters to her room, and her courage in both hands. She sat down forthwith and wrote a note accepting the engagements, posted it, and then went in to face the wrath of the College authorities.

She found them all assembled—Director, Registrar,

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and the rest—and she felt rather like a prisoner at the bar. Mr Blower was also present, by way, as it were, of defending counsel. The Director, addressing her severely, said that the Council had learned that she had sung to Sir Joseph Barnby without their consent, and they required an explanation. The ‘accused’ replied that according to the provisions of her scholarship it was only for one year that she was bound not to appear in public. This was her third, and therefore she was not flouting the regulations in seeking engagements. It was necessary for her to begin earning, in order to assist her people.

The explanation was accepted, but the Director very earnestly impressed upon her that if any engagement should result from the audition she must on no account take any action without consulting the Council. And then Clara, secure in the knowledge of her letter, well and truly in the safe-keeping of the pillar-box outside, told her judges that they were too late—that not one, but three engagements had been offered; and not only offered, but accepted.

Then indeed the storm burst. But it was a harmless one, and soon blew over. Mr Blower pointed out that since his pupil had accepted there was nothing to be done, and the ‘accused’ left the court with her counsel, bearing all the honours of war.

CHAPTER VI

Pending Changes—Clara cast for Orpheus—An Anonymous Singer
—Du Maurier at South Kensington—The Original Trilby—
Lyceum Rehearsals—*The Golden Legend*

THE Albert Hall audition and its results brought about a big change in Clara Butt's College life. It had become apparent that the time was fast approaching when her light could no longer be hidden under a bushel, and for the first time she was allowed to sing at a College concert. She had a most enthusiastic reception; but as these concerts were rather in the nature of 'family affairs,' it was scarcely a public appearance.

But by far the most important outcome of the affair of the audition was the Council's decision that she should play the part of Orpheus in the College opera in the following December. The matter had already been discussed, but was now definitely decided in her favour.

Despite the embargo upon any public appearances during her first two years at College, Clara did sing at a few private houses. At one such engagement, secured for her by Mrs Albert Barker (the mother of Granville Barker), she had to sing unseen and unnamed behind the scenes, in some *tableaux* arranged by Sir Frederick Leighton. One of these portrayed a man dying in prison, lying in chains on a heap of straw, hearing in

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his last moments a heavenly voice singing of a life beyond the grave. The "heavenly voice" was Clara's—and so indeed it seemed to the guests—for after the *tableau* was over they crowded round the hostess, full of curiosity to know whose "that lovely voice" could be. Among the guests that night were Hilda and Lily Hanbury, both of whom afterwards became her close friends; and Lily ran impulsively to the tall, shy College girl, threw her arms round her, and kissed her.

Another of these more or less anonymous appearances, which had far-reaching results upon quite another artist than Clara Butt, was at an entertainment for the employees of the South Kensington Museums, which followed the annual *conversazione* given by the art students at the Imperial Institute. Clara had consented to sing at this function (which was not open to the public, and therefore not a 'public' appearance) to please her friend Gussie Guest, an art student living at Alexandra House. And as luck would have it, George Du Maurier, on the prowl in search of 'subjects' with his friend Herbert Tree, hearing something going on, slipped in unobserved to the back of the hall. They saw and heard an unusually tall girl, in a straight white dress, standing with hands behind her and head thrown back, as she sang, simply and naturally, with a voice of astonishing beauty. And it was there that Du Maurier found his model for Trilby, though she did not know it for long afterwards.

The frontispiece of this book portrays her as he describes her, with "head thrown back, and one foot

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advanced"—a favourite pose of Clara's in those days. He goes on to pay her what is surely the most graceful compliment in all her career :

She was so tender, so humble, so touchingly simple and sweet that one melted at the sight of her. No such magnificent or seductive apparition has ever been seen before or since on any stage or platform. Her voice was so immense in its softness, richness, freshness, that it seemed to be pouring itself out from all round ; one felt it to be not only faultless, but infallible ; and the seduction, the novelty of it, the strangely sympathetic quality ! How can one describe the quality of a peach or a nectarine to those who have only known apples ? And until she appeared, the world had only known apples—Catalinis, Jenny Linds, Grisis, Albonis, Pattis—the best apples for sure—but still—only apples ! If she had spread a pair of large wings, and gracefully fluttered up to the roof and perched upon the chandelier—she could not have produced a greater sensation. The like of that voice has never been heard—nor ever will again. A woman archangel might sing like that—or some enchanted princess out of a fairy-tale. It all seemed as easy to her as opening and shutting her eyes—and yet how impossible to anybody else.

And when the song was over, she waited with her kind, wide smile—that good smile like the Madonna's—so soft and bright and kind.

Herbert Tree was as much impressed with the unknown singer's voice as was his friend, and, having discovered her name, though not that she was an R.C.M. student, he tried to locate her when, later on, *Trilby* was dramatized, in order to engage her to sing Trilby's Chopin *Impromptu* behind the scenes while Dorothea Baird played the part. To this end Mrs Tree made inquiries from Butt's, the fruiterers, in High Street,

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Kensington, only to learn that she was no relation. Clara was finally traced to the College, but was not allowed to accept the engagement.

There was no opera class in Clara Butt's time at the Royal College, and the principals for *Orpheus* were coached by Richard Temple, from the Savoy Theatre. Dr Stanford had also, added to his natural Irish dramatic instinct, an unusually sound knowledge of stagecraft, and from both these men Clara had some valuable training.

As the time for the performance drew near, rehearsals were held at the Lyceum Theatre, to which Clara, the other principals, and the girl members of the chorus were sent under the motherly wing of Mrs Thompson, the College *duenna*. They used to lunch at Dow's Restaurant, near the theatre, where the students were often a good deal embarrassed by their chaperon's ignorance of the unwritten law of tipping. Their waiter had served them particularly well one day, attending good-naturedly to all the special fads and fancies of the singers, and when the party rose to go it appeared as though the worthy fellow's efforts were to be unrecognized in kind. This was more than the ever-generous but almost penniless Clara could stand, and she was fumbling in her pocket for a sixpence, when to her relief she saw Mrs Thompson take out her purse. But her relief was short-lived. She looked back—to see the waiter staring blankly at the single copper which the good Mrs Thompson had pressed into his unwilling hand!

But those lunches were good fun on the whole. And the rehearsals were good fun too—especially when poor

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Eurydice (Maggie Purvis) got a stiff neck from 'dying' on a property bank which was much too short for her.

Clara's emotions were still rather apt to run away with her, and got her into trouble one day at rehearsal. She was singing *Che faro* in the death-scene, so utterly immersed in the sorrows of the unhappy hero, as he embraces his lost love, that she fell across the body of Eurydice, choking with sobs, and broke down, unable to finish the *aria*.

Dr Stanford, from the orchestra, tapped the desk angrily with his baton. "Come, come, Miss Butt," he said, "no nonsense, please! Stop that laughing at once!" Clara rose to her feet, gulped, and faced round upon the conductor; then buried her face in her hands, and sobbed out, "I'm *not* laughing. I'm *c-c-crying*"—and fell a-sobbing louder than ever. Whereupon the corpse of Eurydice—rather glad of the excuse—rose from her very uncomfortable bank and hugged poor Orpheus, patting his shaking shoulders comfortingly, as she murmured, "There, there, old girl, never mind him; it's all right"—a really dramatic little scene which Gluck never even thought of; but unfortunately there was no audience but the choir and orchestra to enjoy it.

It happened that the date decided upon for the College opera—December 10, 1892—was only three days after that of the Royal Choral Society's performance of *The Golden Legend*, in which Clara Butt was to make her first London appearance. So that towards the last she was, as it were, working up to two separate climaxes—though probably the Albert Hall engagement, being her first important professional one, loomed the larger

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of the two in her mind. The rehearsal took place, the night came, and the tall, slim College student, in her plain white frock, threaded her way past the members of the orchestra to her place on the platform, with Albani, Ben Davies, and George Henschel, to face an Albert Hall audience for the first time. Her father and mother had come up from Bristol for the event, and all the Alexandra House girls in a body were there to hear her, and had subscribed for a bouquet made up of a flower from each one of them. The applause after her first solo, *Slowly, slowly, up the wall*, was tremendous, and at the close of the oratorio she received a wonderful personal ovation, in which her fellow-artists joined, Albani saying, "She has the most beautiful voice in England."

When it was all over she walked back across the terrace to Alexandra House with her friends, and found her mother waiting for her in the hall. "Well, Mother," she said, faintly flushed with excitement, but as simple and natural as ever, "did you like it? Did I do well, do you think?" And Mrs Butt, who was quite the least excited person present, said, "Yes, dear, it was very nice."

The critics were not so reserved. The papers next morning had nothing but the warmest praise for the "new young contralto" with the "marvellous voice," and prophesied a bright and prosperous future for her. But warm though their praise was, it was drowned in the chorus of plaudits that greeted her performance as Orpheus three days later. This riveted public attention finally upon her, and set her, in one dizzy leap, on the highest pinnacle of fame.

CHAPTER VII

Orpheus—A Leap to Fame—Press Enthusiasm—Festival Engagements
—A 'Breeze' with Dr Parratt—A Royal Command—Loyal Friendship

THE new contralto's remarkable success at the Albert Hall on the previous Wednesday had created a very great interest in her appearance in opera, and there was a feeling in the air that it was no ordinary students' performance which was to be presented that Saturday at the Lyceum Theatre. A young student, unknown and unheralded, who had taken the Albert Hall by storm on her very first appearance, and who had made that first appearance with the most important choral society in London, could scarcely fail to arouse the curiosity of every one seriously interested in music; and it was a very critical audience that filled the theatre.

From the moment that the first notes of the new *Orpheus* floated across the footlights her success was assured. The enthusiasm was overwhelming. The whole production was given a great reception, and deservedly so, for all the principals were excellent and the chorus very near perfection; but there was no question in anyone's mind as to who had won the chief honours of the day. There was not a single report of the opera which did not centre about the remarkable performance and wonderful voice of "Miss Clara E. Butt, the Morley Scholar," and those reports speak very eloquently for themselves.

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The *Era*, after describing the production as "one of the most remarkable ever given by students," said :

We must first speak of Miss Clara E. Butt, who carried off the chief honours of the afternoon by a performance of the hero which was simply astounding as the work of a youthful student. She may be described in the words of Lord Tennyson, as "a daughter of the gods, divinely tall," for she is six feet two in height, though only nineteen years of age. Her voice is a contralto of the purest quality . . . rich, sympathetic, and equal throughout its entire range. As may be supposed in so youthful a vocalist, the low notes are not yet fully developed, but they give promise of rivalling those of Madame Patey in depth and sonorous effect. Her upper notes are clear and excellent in quality as a mezzo-soprano's, so that every kind of music will be within her range. Miss Butt's tall figure gave her a commanding appearance upon the stage, but there was nothing awkward in her attitudes. Her pleasant and intelligent face expressed the grief and despair of the hero well, though none could expect the artistic power and variety of a Giulia Ravogli.

The *Times* said :

Since there is no artist on the stage who could hope to rival Mademoiselle Ravogli in the part she has made so peculiarly her own, it would be unreasonable to expect that the performance of any student, however gifted, could bear comparison with that consummately artistic personation. Miss Clara Butt, the young singer who took the part of Orpheus, succeeded, nevertheless, in riveting her hearers' attention from the beginning, and her fine voice was used to the greatest advantage throughout. That she is by far the best singer that has ever come from the Royal College of Music is beyond dispute.

The *Musical News* said :

The title-*rôle* was played by Miss Clara Butt, with an ability and effectiveness rarely met with in student performances.

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Miss Butt, who is more than common tall, in addition to being gifted with a contralto voice of exceptionally fine quality, displayed considerable natural talent as an actress. Only a continuance of the excellent training she gives abundant proof of having received is necessary to place her among the very first of vocalists.

The *Daily Chronicle* congratulated the R.C.M. upon having brought before the public a singer with such natural endowments, and continued: "She has a very bright future before her."

"The Stroller" remarked in the *Evening News*:

Miss C. E. Butt was wonderfully good for a student . . . or indeed, for anyone. She is quite at ease on the stage, moves about with confidence and an almost manly grace, looks handsome, and sings extremely well, with a beautiful, rich, even contralto voice. She is very tall and commanding, and seems to have every requisite for the making of a first-rate operatic contralto. I strongly advise Miss Butt to turn her attention to the stage . . . she seems cut out for it. She sang well, paying special attention to the enunciation of her words. I fancy there will soon be a contest among managers for Miss Butt's services. In figure she is a good deal like Miss Agnes Huntingdon.¹

The *Globe*, in a very brief report, found space to say that "Miss Butt, who has a beautiful contralto voice, sang delightfully, with faultless intonation and pathetic expression, eliciting tears as well as plaudits from the charmed audience."

The *Morning Leader*, in a report headed "A Perfect

¹ Miss Huntingdon was the rage of the moment, the most beautiful 'principal boy' in London; so that the comparison of Clara Butt's tall, boyish figure, as she appeared in *Orpheus*, with her was intended as a high compliment.

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Performance of Gluck's *Orpheus*—Miss Butt's Success," said that "the performance was the most perfect that has been seen in the metropolis," and the whole of the remainder of the lengthy account deals with the "wonderful performance of Miss Butt," asserting that it would "stand out as an artistic achievement."

The whole of the Press joined in the pæan of praise. And the nineteen-year-old Clara Butt, a few days before an unknown College student, awoke to find herself sensationally famous. Offers of engagements poured in; she was booked almost before she knew it for those most coveted of appearances, with the big musical festivals. She was engaged for practically every one, including the triennial Handel Festival at the Crystal Palace, though that was not to be held until the following year. She was overwhelmed by this sudden avalanche of correspondence, and a fellow-student, Agnes Dobrée, acted as secretary to her. Letters came from every concert-agent in London, desiring to act as her "sole representative," but here Henry Blower's shrewd wisdom and her own common sense prevented her from entering rashly into any undertakings of that kind, and she replied cannily to them all that she would be glad to consider engagements coming through any of them. It was not until later that she decided to make N. Vert her sole agent, in which capacity the firm acted for some time.

Sir Augustus Harris also wanted her to sign a three-years' contract to appear in opera, but on this proposition Henry Blower put his foot down most determinedly.

Clara returned to College after Christmas, and studied

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hard in between engagements that became more and more frequent. She sang several times at the Albert Hall organ-recitals, and had an amusing encounter there one day with Mr Hedley, the manager, shortly before she was to sing *Elijah* with the Royal Choral Society. He opened a copy of the work at *O rest in the Lord*, and, pointing to a phrase, said, "You must take a breath there; Patey always does. Where's your copy? I'll mark it for you." But Clara horrified him by saying, "You needn't, Mr Hedley, I shan't take a breath—not unless I want to, that is—certainly not because some one else does." The manager quite evidently thought her an arrogant young upstart, but she knew already that true artists must interpret for themselves, and not imitate the interpretations of others.

She sang again with the Royal Choral Society that spring term. And on the day on which she was to sing *Israel in Egypt* she hurried back to the College, after rehearsing for the concert with the orchestra in the Albert Hall, to attend Dr Parratt's choral class, in which she was the mainstay of the altos, and nicknamed by Dr Parratt his 'bass.' But this morning, having a care for the responsibilities of the coming evening, she was taking it easy, and the conductor missed the volume of sound on which he could always count from her direction. He 'picked' at her for some time, and then said acidly, "Do you think you are there for ornament, Miss Butt?" It was too much. Miss Butt (it must be confessed) was taking some credit to herself for having come at all, for students do not sing with big choral societies every day, and she would have had an excellent

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excuse for absënting herself. Moreover, she *had* been singing, albeit softly. So the insult was greater than she could bear; and in all the consciousness of injured innocence she rose in her wrath, threw down her books with a bang, and walked out of the hall, saying, "No! I'm *not* here for ornament! But I know one thing, I'll never come to this class again!" And she never did.

The provincial Press of this time is perhaps the most eloquent proof of how Clara Butt had changed in the twinkling of an eye from a "promising young student" with a "bright future," to "the distinguished contralto" with an established position. The *Newcastle Daily Journal* of February 13, 1893, just two months after her first London appearance, said :

Intense enthusiasm prevailed on the appearance of Miss Clara Butt. . . . Without doubt her gifts cannot be surpassed by any vocalist at present before the public. This is admitted on all sides; for once the critics and the general public agree unanimously.

And then there came one day to the College a telegram sent by the command of the Prince of Wales, desiring a repeat performance of the *Orpheus* which had created such a *furor*.

The date of this second performance was fixed, and rehearsal notices issued. Clara received hers, but to the surprise of both girls (who were now sharing a sitting-room at Alexandra House) Maggie Purvis, the Eurydice, did not; and on discreet inquiry it was learned that the cast had been altered, and the part was to be played instead by Mary Turner, another College soprano.

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Clara, the most loyal of friends, was furious. She went to the rehearsal, remarked upon Maggie's absence, and ostentatiously walked out again, down through the middle of the hall, and back to the sitting-room. There the two girls sat reading, until a message arrived for Clara from Dr Stanford, asking why she did not come to rehearsal.

"Tell him," said Clara, looking up from her book, "that I am waiting for Miss Purvis to receive her call also. We will come together."

Another message came, informing Miss Butt that Dr Stanford had selected a new Eurydice.

"Then tell him," replied Clara, "that if he is having a new Eurydice he must find a new Orpheus as well. He can't have one without the other."

In the end the rehearsal had to be called off, and next day Clara was summoned before the whole College Council. There was a very heated scene. The Registrar told her that she must not think she could behave as though the College were a girls' school.

"No, sir," replied Clara; "but even in a girls' school I should think there might be some sense of loyalty! And I don't see why there shouldn't be some here, even if it *is* a college of music!"

The Councillors were white with rage, but she went on to ask them to consider her own position in the matter. There were only four days before the performance, and only two rehearsals. She knew her part, but how could she do herself and the College justice with a new Eurydice? Miss Turner might be a fine singer—that was not the point; but she was not a quick 'study,' for she had

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taken a year to learn one act of *Fidelio*. And what was more important was that Miss Purvis had had all the work and worry of rehearsing the part, when she had not really wanted originally to do it at all, and it was only fair that she should have her reward, and share in the Command performance. And then, like a true artist, Clara dramatically played her last card. She demanded to see the Royal telegram, and stood there, dominating all those angry men, while the office was turned upside-down in a hasty search. At last it was found, and read aloud :

“ I am commanded by H.R.H. the Prince of Wales to desire a repetition of the performance of *Orpheus* as given by the students of the R.C.M. at the Lyceum Theatre in December last.”

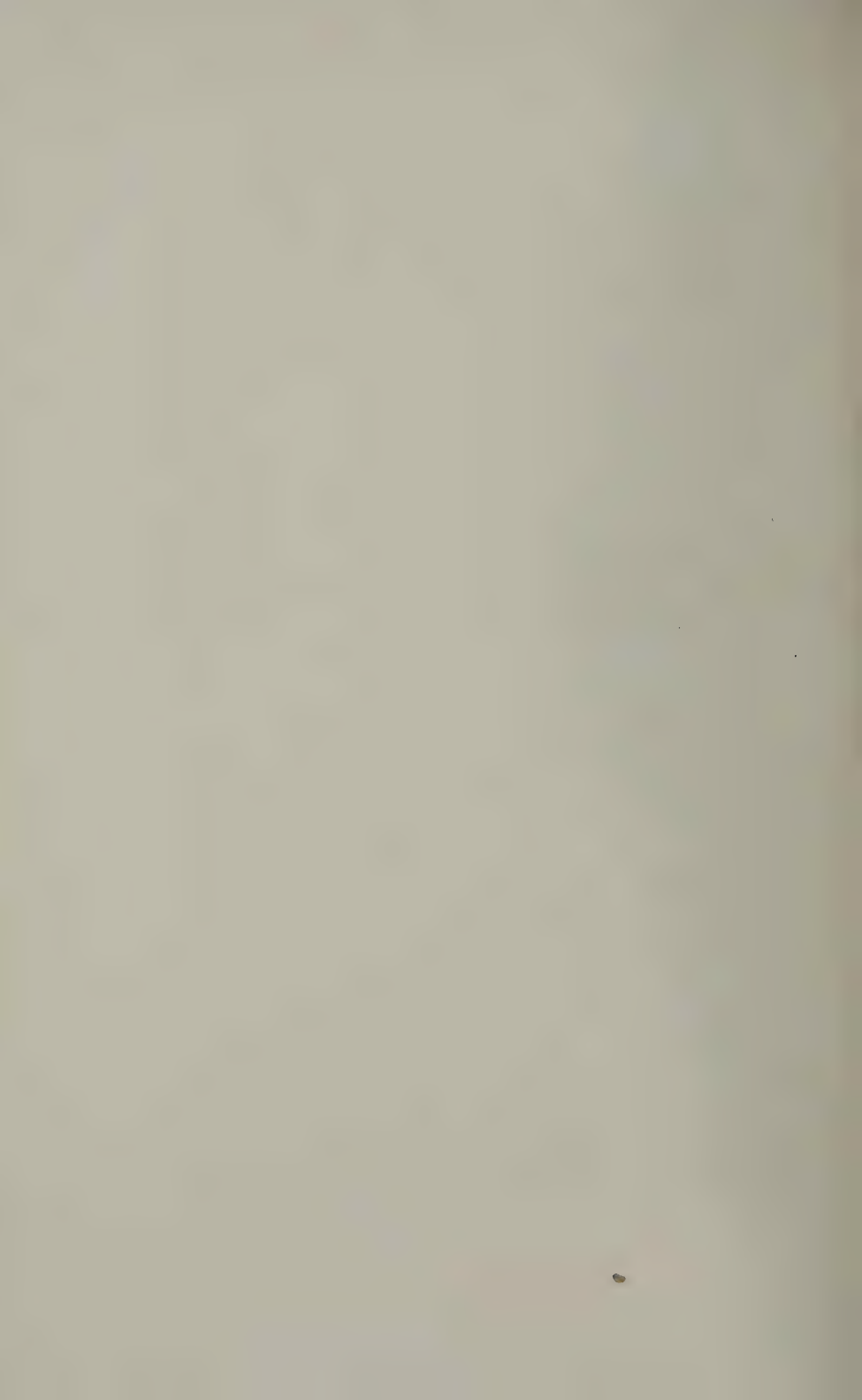
“ There—you see? ” said Clara Butt. “ If you do not have the same Eurydice you will not be carrying out his Royal Highness’s wishes. It will not be a ‘repetition of the performance given last December’! Good afternoon, gentlemen!” And she turned her back upon them, and walked out.

She had won. Next morning both girls received their notices, and went to rehearsal together, trying to look as if nothing had happened. But when Clara made her first entrance, alone on the stage, there arose a deafening burst of cheering from the whole chorus and orchestra, who, as her fellow-students, knew and loved the bold stand she had made for the sake of loyalty. She was deeply touched, and had hard work to keep back her tears, but she struggled through her part, and the rehearsal proceeded. But unhappily the affair was the



IN HER EARLY TWENTIES

Photo Lankester



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beginning of a bitter quarrel. A few months later, at a performance of the *Messiah* at Leeds, at which Clara Butt was singing and Dr Stanford was conducting, the baritone soloist, who was rather nervous, addressed some simple question regarding procedure to her as he sat beside her on the platform just before the performance began. As she bent forward to reply, Dr Stanford noticed her from his desk, and said sharply, before the whole orchestra, "Do not talk, Miss Butt!"

In the interval, as he was chatting with some of the committee, Clara, taking, as usual, the bull by the horns, went up to him and said, "Please understand, Dr Stanford, I will not have you speaking to me as you did just now." To this he replied, "And I cannot have any chattering on the platform!"

"There was no chattering," said Clara. "I was answering a simple question of Mr — which could not possibly disturb anyone. I know how to behave on the platform, and I must remind you that you are here to conduct the performance, not my behaviour." Then she turned away.

She left a very angry conductor behind her, who said furiously, as she disappeared, "I swear before God that I will never conduct for that girl again!"

And he did his best to keep his word. At Manchester, long afterwards, Clara Butt had been engaged for an orchestral concert at which he was the conductor. Her first item was Elgar's *Sea Pictures*, conducted by the composer; but she was also to sing a song of Allitsen's in the second half of the programme, which Stanford was to conduct. At rehearsal all the items except this

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song had been gone through, and Stanford, turning to the orchestra, said, "That is all, men, you can go."

Clara Butt hurried forward and stopped them. "No, no, wait a minute," she called; "there has been a mistake"; and then, addressing Dr Stanford, said, "Are you not going to rehearse my song?"

"No," said Stanford shortly.

"Then I know why," said Clara. "But aren't you sportsman enough to forget a quarrel?"

Dr Stanford still refused, and matters were at a deadlock. Mr Forsyth, the manager, tried to play the peacemaker, but neither side would give way. At last, as appeals to all other points of view were rejected, Clara Butt resorted to sheer common sense. "Dr Stanford is engaged to conduct this concert, as I am engaged to sing," she pointed out, "and he has no more right to refuse to carry out his contract than I have. If he refuses to conduct the accompaniment of my song I cannot sing, and he, not I, will be responsible for the breach of contract."

The argument was unanswerable, for Clara Butt was the only soloist, and the omission of her number was obviously impossible. The conductor, therefore, was eventually persuaded to give in. But the song had not been rehearsed, and the orchestra, on the leader's own initiative, took their time from the singer that night.

The Command performance of *Orpheus* took place at the Lyceum on March 11, 1893, in the presence of the Prince of Wales, the Duchess of Teck, the Princess May, and a very distinguished audience. Celebrities of the musical and dramatic world were to be seen on every side. Santley beamed encouragement from one box, and

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Giulia Ravogli (the most famous exponent of Orpheus of her day) from another. Henry Irving, who had lent the theatre, was there, keeping a watch during most of the performance, from the wings, startling poor Orpheus rather badly at one point, as he caught sight among the shadows of a white face and gleaming eyes, which turned out to be those of the great actor. Ellen Terry, whose dressing-room Clara Butt used, was there, full of kindness and encouragement for everybody, praising Clara warmly for her resource when, at a critical moment in the play, she dropped her sword, but recovered it and wove the movement so deftly into her part that none but a few trained eyes noticed anything unusual—a small thing, but to Miss Terry a significant one on the part of so inexperienced an actress.

Clara's brief but brilliant experience before the public since the first performance undoubtedly enabled her to make her impersonation even better than the earlier one; and at the close her dressing-room was crowded with friends, old and new, eager to congratulate her. In the midst of it all there arrived a message from the Prince of Wales, desiring her presence in the Royal box. Arrived there—this was her first formal Royal audience—she was suddenly confronted with a puzzle. Was she summoned as Orpheus or as Clara Butt? In other words, ought she to bow to his Royal Highness, or to curtsy? She had no idea, so she ingenuously explained her difficulty to the Prince, who decided in favour of the curtsy, "because," he said, "you curtsy so very nicely." "Do I, sir?" said the blushing Clara. "Then I'd like to do it again." And did so, to the Prince's great amusement.

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The critics were more enthusiastic than ever after the Command performance, and had evidently accepted her by now as a singer of assured position. The *Sketch* spoke of "Miss Clara Butt, who can now scarcely be considered as a 'student.' . . . She showed a grace of action and a self-possession most remarkable in so youthful a vocalist."

The *Illustrated London News* said :

Miss Butt repeated her striking impersonation, and seemed to have derived benefit from the kindly and encouraging criticism that her previous effort had awakened. She bore herself with greater dignity and repose of manner, and an even deeper note of pathos seemed to pervade the utterances of the sorrow-laden hero. Miss Butt thus showed herself a thoughtful and intelligent artist, as well as a richly endowed singer, and the success of her future career becomes more than ever assured.

Clara Butt had offers from America, and was actually booked for a tour, beginning at Cincinnati, in the quite early days of her success, but she fell ill, and had to undergo a serious operation. All her engagements had thus to be cancelled. During her illness, when she was in London and far from her own people, she owed much to the motherly care of Mrs Henry Blower, the wife of her singing master. To their house she was taken in an ambulance from the nursing-home; and Mrs Blower took her, as soon as she was well enough to travel, to St Leonards, where she stayed in a boarding-house in Warrior Square, with a College friend, 'Bee' Gilligan, 'Bee's' mother, and her sister Kathleen. Here, in order that she should be undisturbed, she decided to be known as "Miss Linnington," and under this euphonious

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patronymic she accordingly lived and moved and had her being among the boarders.

Clara Butt, the wonderful young singer who had lately startled the world, was a subject of conversation there as elsewhere, and naturally Miss Linnington was often drawn into the discussions. "Had she heard Clara Butt?" "Oh yes, often." "What did she think of her?" "M—mm, well—she didn't know. It wasn't a bad voice, she supposed"; and so on.

And then one day there was a 'musical evening' at the boarding-house. Everybody was helping, and Miss Linnington was warmly pressed to sing. "I'm *sure* you do," one of her new friends kept saying. "You must, because you have such a nice speaking voice. Do try, won't you?" "Oh yes, I'll *try*, if you like," said Miss Linnington brightly, "but I'm afraid you'll be disappointed, you know." So, searching through a song-book, she found *Barbara Allen*, and sat down at the piano and sang it to them in a queer little voice, just the least thing *off the pitch*!

Every one was very kind and polite, but Miss Linnington was not asked to sing again.

She had made great friends during her stay with a dear old lady who was among her fellow-guests; and on the last Sunday evening of her stay, when all the rest of the house-party were in church, she asked her to come into the drawing-room. There she sang *Kathleen Mavourneen*, this time in her own voice. They were friends already, and the bond, thus strengthened, endured up to the old lady's death, many years afterwards.

CHAPTER VIII

The Transition Stage—A State Concert—Queen Victoria's Approval
—An Invitation to 'call' on Royalty—An Historic Season—
Marie Corelli—The *Elijah* on Crutches

WE know how Clara Butt appeared to others in those early days—the tall, slender, girlish figure, full of vitality and grace; the great glowing dark eyes, alight and eager; the attractive, intelligent face, not beautiful, perhaps, according to classical standards, but with a beauty of expression that made it exceedingly pleasant to look upon. She was a young girl of extraordinary charm, superbly gifted, yet so natural and unaffected, possessed of such simplicity of manner and outlook, as to remain completely unspoiled by adulation and success.

But it is less easy to imagine how she appeared to herself; whether she was astonished or overwhelmed or staggered at the sudden transformation from the 'tomboy' student, full of pranks and nonsense, shouting with that great voice of hers along the College corridors and staircases, into the "distinguished contralto," honoured by Royalty, and besieged with offers from every musical organization in the country. She must have wakened o' mornings to wonder, like the old lady in the nursery rhyme, "Can this be I?" and say to herself, "Am I *really* the marvellous singer that they say I am?" But in the end she managed somehow to accept it all without the least personal vanity, as the natural tribute to the voice the gods had given her,

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and to the intangible 'something' to which that voice had been able to give expression. Not otherwise could her personality have remained so untouched and untarnished by her triumphs. Not otherwise could the Clara Butt of to-day be so essentially the same as the simple, jolly, kindly Clara Butt of yesterday—a very dear woman as well as a very great singer. Of all the milestones of her triumphant life, none is quite so interesting as that which marked her entry upon the transition stage, when day by day success became more assured, and engagements more numerous, more important, and more highly paid; when the tone of concert-agents and Press became ever more ardent, and the indulgent patronage of a brilliant student changed to realization of what she was and would become, and merged into the obsequious note adopted only for an artist of supreme attainment and established fame. But through it all Clara Butt remained the same. Her curly head never showed the slightest disposition to 'swell.' She simply continued to sing better and better, since there is no training equal to that of platform experience. Her confidence increased as the confidence of the public in her grew ever greater; yet she sang, as she had always sung and always would sing, utterly without affectation, in a way that went straight to the hearts of her audiences. And as for the success that came with it, well, I think she would tell you, as Rudyard Kipling said of himself, not long ago, that she "had been extravagantly rewarded for doing what she could not have helped doing."

The spring that followed the Command performance was naturally a very exciting one for the young singer,

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and it is not surprising that her health should have been affected by it. The College authorities wisely insisted upon a rest, and sent her away to a quiet boarding-house at Brighton to recuperate. But she was not to escape excitements even there. She received one morning in her quiet retreat the most important communication that had reached her yet—a telegram from Sir Arthur Sullivan, conductor of the State Orchestra, conveying Queen Victoria's command that she should sing at a State concert at Buckingham Palace at the beginning of the summer season.

The concert took place in the great Throne Room, and Clara Butt was the only solo artist, the remainder of the short programme being provided by the orchestra. She chose as her song Saint-Saëns' *Mon cœur s'ouvre à ta voix*.

Mrs Butt came up to London for the great event, and accompanied her young daughter to the Palace, sitting through the concert hidden in a little gallery, high up above the room. It was an impressive scene. Artist and orchestra were in their places, when the doors were thrown open, and the Royal household and guests filed in, rank upon rank of glittering gowns and orders and jewels, and stood in gorgeous array as a fanfare of trumpets announced the approach of the Queen. The orchestra, all standing, played the National Anthem, and Queen Victoria appeared, a sombre but still regal figure in her widow's black, leaning on the arm of her Indian servant, and followed by the members of the Royal family.

To the eyes of the young singer, as she stood there drinking in the wonderful scene and awaiting her turn, the most impressive sight of all was the slow, gradual

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obeisance made to the Queen in unison by all those present as she passed to the throne. It was like the graceful waving of a field of impossibly exotic flowers before a strong yet gentle breeze.

There is no applause at a State concert, and when her song, which she sang with orchestral accompaniment, was finished, there was nothing to show Clara whether or not she had succeeded in winning the Queen's approval. Her Majesty passed straight out of the Throne Room when the last item had been played, and the ordeal was over.

But there was no doubt about the approval of Sir Arthur Sullivan, who heard Clara Butt that night for the first time. Nor was the Queen's verdict long in doubt. Clara received a letter expressing her pleasure, and enclosing a cheque for twenty-five guineas, with which to purchase a gift as souvenir of the concert. She bought with this money a little diamond heart.

Very soon she received another command from the Queen, desiring her to sing at a party at Windsor Castle. This proved a much less formal function than the State concert, and on this occasion the Queen left no doubt as to her opinion. She sent for the young singer immediately after her first song, and warmly congratulated her. After her second, *The Promise of Life*, she sent for her again, and paid her a special compliment. "I have never liked the English language before," she said; "but in your mouth it is beautiful." Twice during the evening a charming lady, who was sitting beside the Queen, came forward from among the Royal guests to speak to the young contralto. After

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congratulating her, she chatted for a time, and then asked if she had ever been to Berlin. On hearing that she had not, the stranger said graciously, "Well, I hope you will go there some day. And when you do, mind you do not forget to let me know, and you must come to see me."

Afterwards, at supper, as the artists were discussing the events of the evening, Clara remembered her invitation. "What a very charming lady that was who asked me to go and see her in Berlin," she said to Tosti, who had been playing for her. "Who is she? Do you know?"

Tosti roared with laughter, and explained to the innocent recipient of Royal favours that the "very charming lady," who had so warmly invited the young English girl to call upon her, was her Majesty the Empress Frederick of Germany.

This was Clara Butt's first meeting with Tosti, and through him her engagements multiplied faster than ever. The tremendous *cachet* of Royal favour, too, had been set upon her. She sang at no fewer than eight Royal receptions, and the most famous of Society hostesses vied with each other to secure for their receptions the services of the "marvellous new contralto." She sang at every great house in London, often with other such famous artists as Joachim and Melba, Tosti accompanying. She sometimes accepted two or three engagements for the same evening, arriving home at Alexandra House in a hansom-cab (Oh, ye gods, quite unchaperoned!) at all hours of the night and early morning.

All sorts of interesting and amusing experiences came her way that first wonderful season. At a party, a dance and *musical*, at the Earl of Cadogan's, at which the Prince

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of Wales was the principal guest, Clara had arrived, and was standing near the piano at the end of the long ballroom with F. A. Sewell, her accompanist. They noticed that the Royal group near by, among whom were Prince George (his present Majesty) and his two sisters, Princess Victoria and Princess Maud, were obviously enjoying some huge joke. And it was evident that Clara was in some way concerned in it, for they kept looking in her direction, and then at Prince George. At last, after what appeared to be a great deal of 'egging on' from the others, the Prince crossed the room to her, and, politely greeting her, asked her to dance with him. There was only one thing to be done. "I'm sorry, sir," said Clara, "but I'm afraid that either you're too short, or I'm too tall." The Prince bowed and retired, amid shouts of laughter from the Royal party, in which Clara had perforce to join, hearing later that the Prince had been 'dared' by his friends to proffer the invitation.

This and many other of Clara Butt's experiences went to prove that Royal personages are by no means as stiff and stilted as they are so often supposed to be, but are quite as well able to enjoy a little harmless fun as humbler folk.

When she sang with Kennerley Rumford at the wedding-party of the Earl of Athlone, many years later, the Queen and Princess Victoria mercilessly teased the bride and bridegroom over the "appropriateness" of the duet *Snowdrops*, in which the two little flowers "softly kissed one another."

And Queen Alexandra, who used to play accompaniments for the King of Portugal when he was staying at Windsor, not long before his tragic end, once confided

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to Clara that she had tricked him into singing a whole song through to the accompaniment of a different one, for his tremendous bass voice completely drowned what she was playing !

One of the most historic occasions upon which Clara sang in her first season was the party given by the Earl and Countess de Gray on the wedding-night of Prince George and Princess May. It was an entirely Royal gathering : the Prince and Princess of Wales and the Duke and Duchess of Teck, parents of the bridegroom and of the bride ; the King and Queen of Denmark, parents of the Princess (Alexandra) of Wales ; the Empress Frederick, and other Royal relations innumerable were there ; in fact, the only commoners present were Clara Butt, Ben Davies, and Tosti.

It was quite an informal party ; and every one, as befitted the occasion, was full of jokes and fun. Clara had thus an opportunity given to few, and certainly unique for a girl of her age and upbringing, of seeing Royalty ‘ unbend ’ and indulge a care-free mood.

The old Duke of Teck, who was a great admirer of Clara’s voice, insisted upon her singing one song after another. “ Go on, go on,” he kept saying. “ Sing just one more. Sing that one with the deep notes in it. I love your voice in that.” Song after song she sang, but still couldn’t find the Duke’s special favourite. And then Tosti, who was playing for her, whispered a suggestion upon which she promptly acted. “ Won’t you *hum* me the one you want, sir ? ” she suggested. Whereupon the Duke, in his gruff voice, rumbled out the refrain of the “ Toreador’s Song ” from *Carmen* !

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The only song left in the portfolio (though she didn't say so) was Goring Thomas's *Summer Night*, so she sang that; and the last deep notes must have met the case, for at the close the Duke said delightedly, "Yes, *that's* it! That's the one I meant!"

At a reception given by Mrs Ronalds, a leading hostess at that time, she met the Duke of Edinburgh, who was an amateur violinist of some accomplishment; and who, as it happened, had given a concert with orchestra in Bristol the previous year, just a week before she, as a perennially 'hard-up' student, had given a concert for the purpose of raising pocket-money. On being introduced by Sir Arthur Sullivan to the Duke, she said at once, "You know, I've always had rather a grudge against you! You gave a concert in Bristol last year just before I did, and everybody came to yours and there was no one left for mine!"

They chatted merrily for a while; but Sir Arthur, drawing her aside afterwards said, "You little devil! Talking to the Duke like that! Do you know you scarcely used a 'sir' all through the conversation?" And Clara remembered with a pang that she hadn't. But she remembered too that the Duke had a merry twinkle in his eye, and she felt sure that all was well, especially when, later in the evening, the Duke sent Sir Arthur over to her to say that he would like to hear her sing *Mon cœur s'ouvre à ta voix*. She told Sir Arthur that unluckily she had no copy of the *aria* with her. A copy was lying on the piano, but, as though anticipating her wish, another well-known contralto, many years Clara's senior, who was standing by and had overheard

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the conversation, remarked, looking down at the song, "That's *my* copy!"—a fairly broad hint that she did not propose offering to lend it. But Sir Arthur Sullivan rose to the occasion. "My child, you *shall* sing it!" he said majestically, adding, "And I will play it for you," which he did, from memory. And anyone who has ever heard that master-musician play may perhaps imagine what a wonderful thing it was to sing to his accompaniment, besides being surely as pretty a snub as was ever administered to a jealous rival!

Later in the season Clara met the Duke again, and he soon proved that he regarded the incident of the Bristol concert as an excellent joke. He left the group of Royalties with whom he was talking just before leaving, and came over to Clara. "Well, good-bye, Miss Butt," he said. "Now, mind you forgive me! And promise me that you are not going to dislike me in perpetuity!" He continued to chat with the laughing *débutante* so animatedly and with such evident enjoyment that the Duchess looked at him quite severely!

During this season Clara Butt made the acquaintance of Marie Corelli. She was sitting in a curtained alcove awaiting her turn to sing, at an 'At Home.' Beside her was a funny little fluffy-haired woman, who rather annoyed her by chattering incessantly to a friend during all the musical items. Presently Clara, thinking her turn must be approaching, went off and sang, returning afterwards to her former place. The little woman was still there, and still chattering; but she had evidently managed to hear something else besides the sound of her own conversation, for she was saying to her friend: "Well, I shan't be



Arthur Sullivan.



SIGNED PORTRAIT OF SIR ARTHUR SULLIVAN

Given by him to Mrs Ronalds and bound with the manuscript of *The Lost Chord*.

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satisfied till I find out who that was that was singing.” Clara said nothing ; but presently some one came looking for her, and asked if she would sing again.

“With pleasure,” said Clara, and went back to the platform. When she had finished she found among the group that had gathered round her the little fair-haired woman, who, taking her hand, said, “My dear, I want to thank you. What a voice ! How wonderful ! I expect you think I’m rather silly.” And here she wiped her eyes. “Of course you don’t know who I am. My name is Marie Corelli !”

“Marie Corelli !” gasped Clara, who happened to be well under the spell of one of the novelist’s books at the time. “Oh, how lovely !” The big girl then took forcible possession of the little woman, and, bearing her off to the seat they had just left, sat her down, and fairly bombarded her with questions about her work.

The acquaintance thus begun was the beginning of a long and pleasant friendship. Clara went several times to stay with Marie Corelli at Stratford-on-Avon, and never ceased to admire and wonder at the complete detachment with which the writer was able to cut adrift from all domestic and social worries, and shut herself up in her den to write steadily from ten till one every morning. She gave the impression that she would do so with equal lack of embarrassment if the Queen herself should be her guest ! And yet she was, as she herself said, “a funny little woman,” not at all above trivial and sometimes rather ill-natured gossip. She by no means gave evidence of possessing the imagination which enabled

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her to construct whole novels as, for instance, *Thelma*, in a setting of which she had no first-hand knowledge.

During a flying visit to Bristol, Clara Butt made another kind of 'first appearance,' and her first speech. She was asked to open a bazaar in the Centre, and when she found that she was expected to "say a few words" she discovered that speaking was not nearly as easy as singing, and couldn't think of a single word to say. But as usual she struck the right note. She won the audience at once by taking them into her confidence. "I never felt such a perfect fool in all my life . . ." she began, and after that all was easy.

She had an odd little experience about this time, which is not specially relevant, but is worth quoting as a psychological problem. She had sung at Bath, and was returning to Bristol with her mother, when a wealthy Bristol resident, who had come over to Bath to hear her, persuaded mother and daughter to dine with him. He ordered champagne, and all the best that the menu provided, treating Clara all the while as the queen of the evening. But when the bill was presented to him he waved it aside, and, murmuring to the waiter, "The young lady will pay," excused himself, and departed in search of his hat and coat.

Poor Clara, utterly overwhelmed, and doubtful even whether she had enough money with her, paid the bill; and then, the 'host,' returning, called a cab to take them to the station. He was about to get in with his outraged 'guests'—but this was the last straw. Mrs Butt, shutting the door in his face, said pointedly, "Good night, Mr —," and told the cabby to drive

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on. And to this day Clara Butt has wondered whether the whole thing was intended as a practical joke.

When the London season was over, Clara, with some of her brothers and sisters and several College friends, went for a country holiday to a farm in Staffordshire. Here Clara, who was a daredevil but not very experienced rider, was thrown and dragged, breaking her ankle, and was, in consequence, laid up for five or six weeks with her foot in plaster-of-Paris. She was only just able to get up in time to go to Birmingham to sing in *Elijah*, and, hobbling by her mother's side, along the platform at the railway-junction where they had to change, met Santley, bound for the same place. "Good gracious, girl!" he said, "you don't mean to say you're going to sing *O rest in the Lord* resting on crutches, do you?"

This so affected poor Clara's sense of artistic fitness that, though it was impossible for her to walk on to the platform without the aid of her crutches, she resolved that she must sing at least that one solo without them. So she rose from her chair and sang it, standing on her one 'good' foot, with the toe of the other just resting on the ground to balance her. The pain was agonizing, and she never knew how she got through the air or the quartettes that followed; the more so as she was weak from having been laid up for so long. Her mother, who was sitting in the audience, heard some one behind her remark, "*How* sad that a girl with such a lovely voice should be a cripple!" It was her first appearance at Birmingham, and the romantic interest attaching to the "poor crippled girl" certainly in no way detracted from the warmth of her reception.

CHAPTER IX

With Duvernoy in Paris—The Neuilly Orphanage—An Offer from the Folies Bergère—The Royal Society of Musicians' Medal—Widening Fame—A Visit to Balmoral—The Queen's Shawl—The Prince of Wales—A Picnic and its Consequences—A Generous Offer

IN the autumn the College authorities, who had extended the benefits of the scholarship to their brilliant student for a fourth year, decided to send her to Paris for a three months' course of study with Duvernoy, this decision following on the signal honour of an offer from Queen Victoria to defray the expenses of the course. Clara went to Paris in the charge of Mrs Bindon, who had succeeded Mrs Thompson as matron at the College. This lady's selection of 'digs' was not a great success. The place was dirty, dark, and dingy, full of characteristically Parisian odours, and of smuts from the adjacent railway. As a result poor Clara was soon as ill as she was miserable. She was rescued by two College friends, Wilma Sandmayer (now in America as Wilma Sanda) and Merville Mason (since dead), who carried her off to stay with them at the Lafayette Home—a sort of Alexandra House for English girls in Paris. She wanted, however, to study French as well as singing, and so went to live with a French family at Neuilly. This also was a discovery of Mrs Bindon's, and again not a happy choice; for the *cicerone* who accompanied Clara on her walks to

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and from her lessons was a slightly 'mental' hunch-back girl, whose appearance affected her most unpleasantly; so her knowledge of the French language was not acquired under the happiest conditions.

She found consolation, however, in the Neuilly English orphanage, where she visited constantly, and soon became the beloved "Auntie Clara" of all the little ones. She used to take all the friends who came to visit her to see "her babies," and before she left Paris "Auntie Clara" made a frock and bonnet for every one of them—there were fifty—and every year for years afterwards she used to give a concert at the Salle Erard, Paris, in aid of their funds. Her professional friends used to help her generously, among them such great artists as Johannes Wolff, and her future husband, Kennerley Rumford, who sang there once for her not long before their marriage.

Clara Butt had undertaken to make no public or professional appearances while in Paris, and was often severely tempted to break this rule, for some very attractive offers were made to her. However, she frequently went as a guest to the musical parties given by Madame Schlesinger, where she was persuaded one evening, as a joke, to give a little 'stunt' with which she used sometimes to entertain her friends. She would produce weird—but still beautiful—trumpet effects through her teeth and closed hands, and was rendering the sad story of *The Ash Grove* with alternate descriptive and trumpet effects in this fashion. It happened that the director of the Folies Bergère was among the guests that evening, and he took the joke so seriously that

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he offered the joker a hundred pounds a week to come and repeat it at the Folies ! The offer was refused, but not without some consideration ; and it is interesting to reflect in what different channels the fame of Clara Butt might have flowed had her decision been otherwise.

On her return from Paris she gave a recital at Queen's Hall, the first she had given in London, and was again acclaimed by the critics and overwhelmed with plaudits by the public. The remainder of the winter passed in a triumphant series of successes in the provinces, at the concerts of the Royal Choral Society, and other leading societies, and several Festivals—the first of these at which she had appeared being at Hanley and Bristol, in October 1893.

During her absence in France the Royal Society of Musicians' Medal for the most successful student of the year had been awarded to her. It was presented by the Prince of Wales ; but as she could not receive it in person it was placed for safe-keeping in the charge of some London lawyers till she could claim it. She left it for some time after her return, for, to be quite frank, honours and awards, even at that early stage of her career, made but little impression upon Clara's mind. When she did finally go for it she made a *faux pas* which haunted her for long afterwards. She was received by a rather dour gentleman, and, wishing to make up for her lack of promptness, which she feared might have seemed ungracious, and suggest a lack of appreciation, she assumed a display of great enthusiasm. " Oh, do let me see ! " she exclaimed. " I am so excited about it. Is it *gold* ? " She really did not mind whether it was

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made of gold, lead, or pewter, but the poor man's face fell. "No," he said sadly, "I'm afraid it isn't; it's only silver." His obvious distress made Clara realize that, in her desire to please, she had said exactly the wrong thing!

The next two years were a triumphal progress, in which Clara Butt went on from strength to strength, achieving ever greater and greater fame as an artist, and capturing the hearts of all who heard her—or even heard of her—with her extraordinarily winning personality. Imperceptibly she became a sort of 'institution,' for whom the English people had a proprietary, personal affection, and crowds would gather, not only to hear her, but to see her and watch her pass by. Very soon she was the biggest 'draw' on the concert platform; and the name of Clara Butt was familiar throughout the whole world.

She sang at her first Handel Festival, under August Manns, in 1894; and in the autumn of the same year was commanded to sing at Balmoral, with Albani, and with Lane Wilson as accompanist.

Queen Victoria always wore very low-necked evening gowns, and insisted very rigorously upon regulation *décolletages*, and no wraps, for all ladies attending her Court. On the occasion of Clara Butt's visit to Balmoral, however, she made a notable exception, which made the young singer the envy of the whole feminine *entourage*. Clara had a slight cough, which the Queen noticed and remarked upon. She sent a footman for the contralto's wrap; but as he failed at once to find it, she sent him back for one of her own priceless Paisley

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shawls, which Clara wore round her shoulders all the evening. She was in great doubt, when packing up next morning, as to whether her Majesty had intended the shawl as a gift. Albani was of opinion that she had, and that Clara should take it away with her; but her heart failed at the idea of going off with one of the Queen's shawls, which, after all, she might never have been intended to keep; so she left it in her room, and has never known to this day whether she did right or wrong.

Following this occasion, the Queen, who had already presented Clara with several other valuable gifts, sent her the Victorian Badge with the message, "This is the nicest thing I have to give. I only give it to the singers I love." The badge is one of the very few remaining of those which were presented to the nurses who served in the Franco-Prussian War. The Queen had them gilded, and kept them for presentation to her very special favourites, among whom was also Albani.

The Prince of Wales delighted in Clara Butt's singing, and it soon became an understood thing that she should be engaged by any hostess who was to have the honour of entertaining him. A pleasant experience that thus came her way was a week's house-party given by the Earl and Countess of Warwick, which included the Prince and many of the greatest personages in Society, to whom she sang every night.

She was greatly touched by the Countess's thoughtful kindness to her, and by the Earl's obvious devotion and admiration for his beautiful wife.

She was always engaged, some years later, during

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the Prince's friendship with Mrs George Keppel, to sing at any social functions at which they were to be present. Tosti was wont to say, by the way, that he and Kennerley Rumford were responsible for that same friendship, as Mr Rumford sang *Beauty's Eyes* to his accompaniment on the occasion of the first meeting!

One of the most historic events in the summer of 1894 proved a rather expensive one for Clara Butt. It was the 23rd of June, the very height of the season, and, as often happened, she was booked to sing at three 'At Homes' in the same evening, dashing from one to the other after her item, and back again to each house for her part in the second half of the programme.

She had just finished singing her last song at the second reception, with comfortable time in which to drive back to the third. Her brougham was at the door, and she was saying good-bye to Madame Albani, Plançon, and her fellow-artists, when the host rose and announced that news had just been brought of the birth of a son to the Duke and Duchess of York (their present Majesties). There was a scene of great excitement; and Albani, seizing Clara by the arm, dragged her to the platform, and started to sing *God save the Queen*.

Even then all would have been well, had Clara not found, when at last she was able to get away and run downstairs, that her brougham had been turned from the door amid the crowd of carriages being called up for the departing guests; and when she finally arrived at her third engagement the concert had come to an end just five minutes before.

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The hostess, perhaps not unnaturally, was very much annoyed ; and was only mollified when Clara Butt suggested that, as she had sung in the first half of the programme only, she should be paid but half her fee—twenty-five instead of fifty guineas—an offer which was accepted with alacrity.

In the summer of 1895 Sir Arthur Sullivan gave a big picnic at his house at Walton-on-Thames. All the musical and many of the social celebrities of the day were there—Tosti, Calvé, Melba, Ancona, Plançon, Lord Royston (afterwards the Earl of Hardwicke), and Clara Butt, among them.

They picnicked gaily all day on the river, and, returning to town by special train at night, some of the party played poker. Clara had never played, and did not know the game. So Lord Royston, remarking “Beginners always bring luck,” said to her, “You come and sit beside me and tell me what to play.” She did, and he won “all along the line,” and wanted her to share his winnings at the end—but she refused. At the station, when the time came for parting, there were the usual rather boisterous farewells, and all the men “kissed Melba good-bye” and wanted to do the same to Clara. But promiscuous kissing was never in Clara’s line, and she would have none of it.

However, M. Plançon would take no refusal, and he seized hold of the reluctant contralto and gave her a hearty embrace. In return, Clara, her spirit aroused at once, first slapped his face, and then burst into tears. There was a rather awkward little scene, in which Melba told Clara she was “a silly young ass” to make such

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a fuss about nothing, and everybody seemed to the emotional girl to be rather unkind and unsympathetic—except Lord Royston, who patted her shoulder consolingly, told her to forget all about it, and saw her safely into a hansom for home.

It was a ridiculous incident, but it had important results. Not long afterwards the young singer's health again began to give serious cause for alarm. Her heart, never very strong, was paying the penalty of over-work and over-excitement; and when she fainted at a concert at Exeter, and again at Queen's Hall, her friends decided that it was high time to call a halt. Mrs Ronalds, the London hostess at whose house Clara had so often sung since the first days of her success, wrote to her, urging her to give up singing for a year, adding that some friends who were deeply interested in her would like to pay her expenses for a year's study abroad, and asking Clara to say what sum she thought would be necessary to carry out the plan.

Clara recognized the wisdom of the proposal, for she felt she could not continue her strenuous life much longer without a breakdown. But she was now practically supporting her family, her father's affairs not having prospered, so that it was a serious matter for her to cease earning. She estimated on that basis that she would require £600 for their needs, and could manage with £300 for her own; and wrote gratefully to Mrs Ronalds to that effect.

Mrs Ronalds replied that the £900 would be paid into a Paris bank for her, and that the giver desired not to appear; that it was entirely a gift of admiration;

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but that if in the future at any time she felt she wished to repay it she might do so.

Clara went first to Paris for six months, where she studied with Bouhy; and afterwards for another six months to Etelka Gerster, in Berlin. It was not until five years later—a year after her marriage—that she received a letter from Mrs Ronalds, telling her of Lord Hardwicke's illness, and saying that she thought she would now like to know who it was that had made it possible for her to have her year abroad. And only then did Clara learn that it was the Lord Royston who had always remained in her memory as the most kindly and understanding of her fellow-guests at Sir Arthur Sullivan's picnic, and whom she had met only casually in Society since, who had thus played the fairy-godfather. And with the greater knowledge of life and of the world that the intervening years had brought her, she realized what an unusual and unselfish gift his had been. He died shortly afterwards; but not before she had the pleasure of writing to express her gratitude, and of repaying to his bank the money he had so generously given her.

CHAPTER X

Departure for Paris—Saint-Saëns and the Perfect Delilah—Etelka Gerster—The German Royalties—The Kaiser at Home—Visits to Potsdam—A Present from Grandmamma—European Concerts—Continental Travelling Experiences

IN 1896, after a long round of 'farewell' concerts, Clara Butt left the concert platform for a year and departed for Paris to become a student again.

For six months she took lessons with Bouhy, staying first at Miss Field's English hotel, and afterwards in the Boulevard Pereire, with a Madame David and her son and daughter. Bouhy was impressed not only with her voice, but with her artistic gifts, and used often to say, "Why do they speak only of the wonderful *voice* of Clara Butt, and not of Clara Butt the artist?"

Clara had long ago made Saint-Saëns' *Delilah* music her own, and made up her mind to see the composer, rather unapproachable though he was reported to be. He had a curious habit of 'disappearing,' when inspiration and the mood seized him, and lying *perdu* until such time as he felt disposed to return to civilization. However, Clara ascertained that he had been seen in Paris within the last few days, and was therefore almost certainly at home, so she went to call. The man who answered the door seemed very dubious about admitting her, and attempted to put her off, but the tall visitor drew herself up to her full height and insisted that she must, and would, see M. Saint-Saëns!

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The dapper little French *valet* fairly wilted at the sight of the commanding presence before him, and so Clara was shown in through the heavy curtains into the composer's music-room. She waited for some time, and when at last Saint-Saëns appeared through the folding doors he was obviously not very pleased at this presumptuous invasion of his seclusion. The visitor explained that she was one Clara Butt, from England, a student with M. Bouhy, and that she wanted to sing her unwilling host's *Delilah* songs to him.

She sang them. And M. Saint-Saëns no longer resented her intrusion. "But, mademoiselle," he exclaimed, "why have I never heard you? Why are you not singing in opera? Never till now have I found my *Delilah*. Always, if she has the voice she has not the looks, and if she has the looks she has not the voice. But now, at last, I have found her!"

Saint-Saëns wanted to produce *Samson and Delilah* there and then, with Clara Butt in *Delilah*'s part, but she explained that she had given her word not to sing for a year, and the matter was dropped for the time. But when her year's study was over Saint-Saëns returned to London with her, intending to make arrangements for the production there of the opera, with Clara Butt as *Delilah*, and Alvarez, the tallest tenor before the public, as *Samson*. But unfortunately the Lord Chamberlain decreed otherwise. The opera dealt with a Biblical subject, and, for this reason, permission for a stage performance was refused, only concert performances being permitted.

M. Saint-Saëns went back to Paris an angry and dis-

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appointed man, and the world was deprived of the perfect Delilah.

After six months in Paris, Clara decided to spend her next period of study in Germany. She chose Etelka Gerster, of Berlin, as her teacher, and the choice proved a most happy one. Gerster, a Hungarian, was probably the greatest soprano of her day; and it has been said of her that had disaster not overtaken her, Patti would not have been the unchallenged queen that she was. At the very height of her early fame Etelka Gerster was singing the *prima donna's* part in grand opera one night, when, without the slightest warning, her voice suddenly failed, owing to some obscure form of throat paralysis. The performance came to an abrupt standstill, and Etelka Gerster never sang again. Afterwards, however, she became a famous teacher of singing.

The dramatic pathos of the story had captured Clara Butt's imagination, and influenced her to a great extent in her choice. And she found in Gerster not only a most inspiring teacher, but a lifelong friend. She had married Count Gardini, an Italian, and their country home was at Mezzana, near Bologna. There, in the years that followed, Clara often used to go and stay in order to rest and study, and to gain fluency both in German and Italian. On one of these visits she drove over with a party of friends to see an ancient buried temple which some gardeners on a neighbouring property had come upon in the course of digging. The find had been carefully excavated, revealing a lofty chamber through which there flowed a subterranean stream. It was an eerie, echoing place—the very setting for Beethoven's

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In questa tomba oscura—and in it, with the melancholy music of running water for her accompaniment, and a flickering torch as illumination, Clara sang the wonderful air, as its composer may well have hoped, but never believed, that it could be sung.

Etelka Gerster's malady was a strange and cruel one. Sometimes, for a short period, her throat would seem to recover, and she would say to her daughters and Clara, as they were walking in the garden, "I think I could sing to-day!" Then the lovely voice would ring out in exquisite runs and trills, as though a thousand birds were singing. The girls would hurry her to the piano in the big hall of the *château*, and there she would sing to them, until suddenly the voice would fail and die away, and the singer would be dumb again!

Her two daughters remained close friends of Clara Butt after their mother's death. Berthe, the elder, married the conductor of the famous Cincinnati orchestra, and is a well-known singer. Linda is the Contessa Malvasia, and lives near her old home at Bologna.

Soon after Clara Butt had started to study in Berlin she was driving about the city one day with some friends, who were pointing out to her the principal buildings. "What place is that?" she inquired, as they passed one of them. "Oh, that's the Friedrichshof, where the Empress Frederick lives," was the reply. "Is it really?" exclaimed Clara, remembering at once her encounter at Windsor. "Why, I'd forgotten all about it! She asked me to go to see her. I must write to her."

The girls laughed and teased her; but when she

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reached home Clara sat down and wrote a little note to the Empress, recalling their meeting and her gracious invitation, telling her Majesty that she was now studying in Berlin. A reply came back at once, inviting her to "come to tea this evening, and bring some songs." ("Tea," it should be explained, is served in Germany after dinner in the evening.) The Royal carriage was sent to fetch her, and off she went to the Friedrichshof, to find that she was by no means the only musician present. Joachim was there, with his violin, and Mendelssohn, a nephew of the composer, with his 'cello. The Empress Frederick and her daughters were the hostesses, and all were emotionally enthusiastic over her singing.

Very soon after this there came a command from the Kaiser—who had evidently heard about Clara from his sisters—to sing at a party at the palace. As soon as she began the Kaiser jumped to his feet, and stood leaning against a pillar, watching her. Every now and then—at a very low note, or a very full one—he would make excited signs to his sisters, and whisper, "Marvelous! You were quite right!" And when Clara had finished he warmly congratulated her. After her second song, *Light in Darkness*, the Kaiserin came across to her, with hands outstretched, and tears in her eyes, and said brokenly, "Go on, my child, go on always singing those songs; they are sermons in themselves."

In winter-time in Germany, when the snow is deep on the ground, it is a popular pastime to go sleighing in the Grünwald, through a cold, white world under the shadows of the forest, where the lights gleam cheerfully

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in tiny dark inns, at which you may stop, if you will, and restore a little warmth with a glass of home-made cherry-brandy. And there, next day, Clara was driving over the frozen snow with her friends Wilma Sandmayer and Merville Mason (with whom she was sharing a flat in the Wittenburgplatz) when they heard, above the jingling of their own sleigh-bells and the muffled pounding of the horses' hoofs, the note of a silver post-horn. There was only one such horn, the Kaiser's, and as the two sleighs met, the three young girls experienced for the first time the 'thrill' of gracious Royal bows and smiles.

A few days later, in February, and (as she shyly told him) near to her own birthday, the Royal carriage was again at the door of the house in the Wittenburgplatz to take Clara to the Kaiser's birthday-party. There was nothing formal about this occasion; the Kaiser was in a thoroughly frivolous mood, full of jokes and nonsense, insisting that poor Count von Bülow should try to play Clara's accompaniments. The Count obediently did his best, and played over several songs while Clara and the Kaiser hummed them in concert. But the Lord of the Fatherland demanded *Mon cœur s'ouvre à ta voix*, and then von Bülow met his Waterloo! He struggled on, but the attempt was a ghastly failure, though the Kaiser did his best to help by humming and beating time! "No, no!" he kept saying. "That's not the way she wants it," striking him playfully with the little cane he always carried under his contracted arm. "Can't *you* make him play it the way we want it, Miss Butt?"

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During the evening the Kaiser went up to Clara with a confidential air and said, "Come here, I've got something to show you," and he carried her off to a big room where all his birthday-presents were laid out in glittering array, rather like the gifts at a fashionable wedding. Clara duly admired the display, and the Kaiser, leading her to where one or two articles were placed alone on a small table, said impressively, "Now, here's something very special. *What do you think of that?*"

"That" was a rather ordinary little water-colour in a very ordinary little frame, and poor Clara was somewhat at a loss. She murmured, "Very nice indeed, sir."

"Whom do you think it's from?" he went on. "You can't guess? Well, I'll tell you. It's from some one you know very well indeed. It's from my grandmother, your Queen!" Clara decided that discretion was the better part, and murmured a tactful ambiguity. She was not quite equal to acknowledging the twinkle which she distinctly saw in the corner of the Royal eye, flagrantly inviting irreverent comment on the gift!

After this the Royal carriage was often at the door, and Clara went frequently, and quite informally, to the palace. She became very friendly with the Baroness von Gerstoff, the Kaiserin's favourite lady-in-waiting, and used to go to tea with her, when they were sometimes joined by the Princesses. One afternoon Clara had a severe headache—a trouble to which she was very subject—and the Princess Fedora had made her lie down on the couch while she sat beside her, applying

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cool bandages. Quite unexpectedly the door was suddenly thrown open, and the stentorian tones of a Court flunkey announced, "Her Majesty the Kaiserin!" Clara was making haste to scramble to her feet when the Kaiserin appeared, and quickly stopped her with uplifted hand.

"You know what I came for, I expect," she said. "I heard you were here, and I wanted you to sing to me. But I see you are not well. So never mind; stay where you are and rest. You must sing to me the next time you come instead."

The next time soon came, and many more after it. Clara often went to sing to the Kaiser and Kaiserin, playing her own accompaniments. The Kaiserin's special favourite was *Light in Darkness*, which, by the way, Clara had always to sing in after-years at any concert she might give in Berlin, for the Kaiserin always made a point of being present. She had to sing it, moreover, quite irrespective of its appropriateness to the remainder of the programme!

Clara used occasionally to see the Kaiser's children on her visits to the palace, and at Potsdam, where she stayed several times. The Princess Victoria was then a dainty little girl of six or so, with a pretty way of mincing down the stairs with her short skirts held up in her tiny hand, by way, no doubt, of showing what a perfectly nice little princess's manners ought to be. The young Crown Prince and his two brothers were immensely intrigued with Clara's ability to 'blow her own trumpet,' and insisted upon being taught the trick which had won her an offer to 'go on' at the Folies

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Bergère a year or two earlier! The young Princes took most kindly to the game, and rehearsals were unceasing, much to the disgruntlement of the Royal household. The Kaiserin remarked next day that there had been no peace since, and she wondered that they had any front teeth left!

The Kaiser used always to greet Clara on each visit by inquiring what German songs she had been studying. She found the guttural tongue of the Fatherland far easier to sing than to speak, and used to bungle awkwardly over such titles as *Wäldersgespräch*, to the huge enjoyment of the Kaiser, who would turn to any others who were present and remark, "Isn't it funny? She can sing German songs like a German, but she *can't* pronounce the titles!"

One evening the Kaiser said to her, in rather a hesitating tone, "You wouldn't think it, would you? Nobody knows it, but I also have written some music." Pressed to produce some of his compositions, the Royal musician demurred at first, like any other diffident amateur. It wasn't much, after all—he had written it on a wet day when there was nothing else to do—and many other such time-worn excuses were offered. But of course it was produced at last, after a proper amount of pressing, and both von Bülow and Clara Butt played the composition over. It was "quite nice"—a simple sort of hymn-like or anthem-like piece of music, without any claim to originality; but obviously he was inordinately proud of it, and of course Clara paid him adequate compliments!

Clara Butt was on the happiest and friendliest terms

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with the German Royalties in those far-off pre-War days. And perhaps she alone among English people was allowed to know them as human beings, and to penetrate the prickly hedge of formality that surrounds every throne. More than that, they recognized that the sovereignty of art is greater than that of birth. The Kaiserin would often forbid her to rise when she entered the room; and the Princess Fedora absolutely forbade her to curtsy, and would say, "I *won't* have you curtsying to me."

When Clara was about to leave Berlin the Kaiserin wished to give her some present in remembrance, and asked her lady-in-waiting to inquire whether there were anything that she would especially like. Clara told the Baroness von Gerstoff that what she really wanted was a signed photograph of the Kaiserin; but this, the lady-in-waiting explained, was just the one thing she could *not* have, as in no circumstances might such a gift be given to a commoner.

But although she might not gratify her *protégée's* desire for a photograph, the Kaiserin determined that her gift should be a really personal one; so she went herself to a jeweller's, and chose a very heavy, very expensive, diamond bracelet, and gave it to Clara at parting. It was a magnificent, but to modern English taste a somewhat cumbrous and thoroughly 'German' ornament.

The friendship shown to her by the German Royal family naturally ensured for Clara Butt an immense social as well as artistic success when, having resumed her professional life in England, she returned to Berlin



THE LATE EMPRESS OF GERMANY

Presented by her to Clara Butt on her last visit to Potsdam. The only signed portrait ever given to a commoner. (See page 155.)

Photo T. H. Voigt



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and gave a concert at the Sing Akademie. Her triumph was tremendous ; and the Press critics, who in Germany are the most critical in the world, lavished plaudits upon both her voice and her art.

Her appearance, also, made a deep impression. She wore an Empire gown of very heavy white *crêpe de Chine*, falling in long, straight folds from a tight-fitting yoke, outlined with pink rosebuds. And the enraptured German journalists, unused to so pleasant a departure from the weighty figures and fashions of their native *prima donnas*, poured out the cream of their vocabularies in descriptions of the charming picture she made as she descended the steps on to the platform, some comparing her poetically to famous portraits of the Empress Josephine.

She was equally successful at Vienna, Paris, Budapest, and Prague, at all of which she gave concerts about this time. At Prague her concert was on a Friday, and she was due at another important engagement in one of the other capitals on the following Monday ; but so great was the demand for seats in Prague that a second concert was hastily arranged and given on the Sunday night ; and this, despite the short notice, was as crowded and as successful as the first.

While in Vienna she received a letter from Dr Richter, asking her to sing at some orchestral concerts he was about to give at St Petersburg. Unfortunately Vert's, her agents, had already booked so many engagements ahead for her that it was impossible to fit in a visit to Russia, a failure which, in the light of later events, proved an even greater disappointment than it was at the time.

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There were plenty of innocent 'high jinks' among Clara and her friends during the Continental tours that followed her year abroad. At a ball at Vienna she was as usual the centre of an adoring group of young men, all competing ardently for her favours, and, as nonsense was the order of the evening, she adopted the methods of the princess in the fairy-tale, and set her admirers a task. He who would have the best hope of winning her smiles would be he who could stand longest on his head and hands! So down went all these immaculately groomed and tailored youths, surrounded by the laughing group of girls, in the middle of the ballroom floor. Keys and coins and watches and odds and ends tumbled out of pockets on to the shining boards, and the fun was fast and furious. When at last the flushed, dishevelled competitors resumed their normal equipoise Clara calmly told the winner (who had certainly held out the longest, but whose amiability had failed to survive the test) that she was afraid his temper would disqualify him from any possible chance of winning her!

At Budapest her admirers hired bands to serenade her—a nerve-racking form of devotion from which she was glad to escape, though the bands, playing the most languishing of Hungarian waltzes, were excellent. Still, you can have too much of anything, even of such melodious wooing as this! So off she went with one of her friends, for a drive behind a fine pair of bay stallions, only to find a worse fate awaiting her; for one poor horse fell and broke its leg, and had to be shot. Her escort seemed to welcome the opportunity to show his mettle and resource by the speed with which

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he had another horse brought, and hurried her away from the painful scene.

At Berlin she received many rather embarrassing attentions, among them those of a wealthy suitor who persisted in sending her valuable jewellery which she just as persistently returned.

Mrs Butt joined her daughter in the summer holidays of her year abroad, and they went first to Spa, to take the waters, and afterwards to Axenstein, among the mountains near Lucerne. On the return journey Clara found herself in a couple of rather awkward predicaments due to her inexperience as a traveller, but from these her popularity as a singer was the means of extricating her. Their tickets were taken, and on leaving Axenstein she asked the *hôte* how much cash she would require for the incidental expenses of the journey. He said that about five pounds would suffice, and she accordingly cashed a cheque for that amount. Arrived at Lucerne, mother and daughter spent the day idling pleasantly, and then, shortly before their train was due to leave, went to the luggage-office to register their trunks. What was their horror to find that this would cost over six pounds (they were not travelling by any means 'light'), and poor Clara had only five pounds in her pocket for the whole trip! She was at her wits' end, when up came a Schweizerhof porter who touched his cap, and said in English, "Excuse me, miss, you seem to be in a difficulty. I recognized you, and I thought I would tell you that Sir Arthur Sullivan is staying at our hotel. I am sure he would be able to help you."

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Before she could make up her mind what to do, another porter, also English, came up, and went one better. He also had recognized Clara Butt, saying he had heard her sing at Nottingham, and he offered to lend her the money to pay for the luggage. Pleased but embarrassed, she said that it was very kind. Would he accept her cheque? "Of course I will, miss. I will accept anything from you," replied the porter; so the exchange was made, the luggage paid for, and the travellers started on their way.

But their troubles were not over. At Basle they were to change into their 'sleepers,' which had been wired for in advance, but not paid for. They found that *lits-salons* (the most expensive grade of Continental sleeping-compartment) had been reserved, and that the charge was five pounds! So here they were, as badly off as ever. Clara explained to a rather unsympathetic railway official that they must give up the berths, and he must find them ordinary places on the train. But there were none, or so he said; every seat was booked.

And then another Good Samaritan came to the rescue. An Englishman who, with his wife and party, was standing by, evidently about to board the same train, courteously approached and said that he had overheard their difficulty. The same thing, he added, once happened to him, and he would like to act as their banker. Again Clara had been recognized, for her new friends in need had often heard her sing. The offer was gratefully accepted, and the two parties travelled pleasantly together to London, where Clara handed over a cheque

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which, however, she was told, "would never be presented for payment."

During her stay in Berlin, Clara went frequently to parties given by Ernst Günther, the Kaiserin's brother. When she left for Paris he and his suite travelled by the same train, as did also the Grand Duke Michael of Russia. Chatting with Clara in the train, the Grand Duke told her that he was "thinking of settling in England," and that his brother too "wanted nothing so much as to buy a little place in England, and settle down." She thought it a very nice compliment to her country on the part of the unknown Russian gentleman, and did not realize until later that it was the Tsar of All the Russias who was being spoken of as having this laudably simple ambition! Poor Tsar! He never carried out his plan. But the Grand Duke was more fortunate. He married the Countess Torby, and settled in the safe, suburban seclusion of Hampstead.

CHAPTER XI

A Serious Accident—Musicians at Play—A Pastel Portrait—A Family of Vocalists—First Visit to America—Kennerley Rumford appears—A Romantic Courtship—Marriage in Bristol Cathedral

CLARA had left Alexandra House at the end of 1893, and lived for a time with her friend Maggie Purvis, whose parents were in London. She then took a flat in Hyde Park Mansions, with a Miss Grant as *dame de compagnie*, and this remained her home during the whole of her single life.

It was here that she returned after her year of study in France and Germany, bringing with her Madame Snella, to take the place of Miss Grant, who had set up house in a country cottage near Broadway. Clara also conceived the idea of a country cottage in which to spend quiet holidays, and she went down to stay with Miss Grant in order to look for one.

She hired a dog-cart, and used to drive about the country every day. One morning, when the trap came round, a new horse was in the shafts, and the groom explained that her usual one, which was not only a harness pony but a good saddle-hack, had been ordered by Madame Mary (Anderson) Navarro, who always rode it. The new horse, unfortunately, proved to have the habit of 'crossing its legs,' and as they were jogging gaily along a lonely road, down it went—hurling Clara out on her head. Miss Grant was luckily unhurt, and she picked herself up, to find her friend unconscious.

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Terrified, she dragged her into the shelter of the hedge, and ran down the road in search of help. She walked for two miles before she saw a house through the trees. This proved to be Lord Redesdale's, at Moreton-in-the-Marsh, and there the poor woman, dishevelled and panting, dashed up to the door and astonished the servant who opened it by gasping out hysterically, "Clara Butt!—the singer!—dreadful accident out there!—I think she's dead!"

The man seemed to think she was mad, but he fetched Lady Clementina, who managed to gather what had happened from poor Miss Grant's disjointed sentences, and sent off in hot haste to fetch a doctor and have Clara carried to the house.

Clara had lain unconscious under the hedge for two hours, and it was a full twenty-four before she came to herself in her strange bedroom. She had severe concussion, and was laid up for six weeks or so. There was consternation throughout the whole musical and social world when the accident was reported, and shoals of telegrams, including one from Queen Victoria, were sent to her. Maurice Farquhar, the French bari-tone, covered himself with glory by announcing the occurrence excitedly to every one he met, exclaiming, "Have you heard? Zere's been an accident. Clara Butt has *concoction* of ze brain."

Clara Butt was always the soul of hospitality, and there were many merry parties at Hyde Park Mansions. Many notable musicians were among her guests, as well as the humbler friends of her college days. Alberto Randegger, changed from the critical R.C.M. professor

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into a devoted friend, caught the general atmosphere of gaiety, and, arriving late on one occasion, astonished the hungry company who were impatiently awaiting his arrival to go into dinner, by entering the room on all-fours. He could think of no other way, he said, to express his abject contrition !

Johannes Wolff was another frequent visitor, and prided himself upon his skill at making mayonnaise from a recipe of his own. He always concocted the mixture with the greatest secrecy, behind a screen.

On her return from Paris Clara brought with her a pastel-drawing of herself, with which she was rather pleased, and which (though she was rather afraid that they would want to keep it !) she took down to Bristol to show to her father and mother before hanging it up in her own flat. But she need have had no fears. Her sister Hazel summed up the family verdict when she exclaimed, "Hullo ! that's Miss D——, isn't it ?" Miss D——, it should be explained, was notoriously the ugliest woman in Bristol ! So Clara quietly packed up the drawing and took it back to Hyde Park Mansions, where, she thought, it would be properly appreciated by her friends.

She gave a dinner-party at the flat soon afterwards, at which Johannes Wolff, Leo Stern, Bemberg, and Bernard Rolt were among the guests. The pastel had been hung in the dining-room, and when some delicately browned rissoles were served, Bemberg, helping himself to a handful, hurled them at the portrait, expressing thereby, as it proved, the opinion of the assembled company, for his opening shots were the signal for a concerted bombardment that ceased only for lack of munitions.

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Nor was this the last of the indignities to which the drawing was exposed before it was ignominiously consigned to the box-room. At an afternoon party Mrs Butt was sitting in the dining-room, where tea was being served at a buffet, when Hilda and Lily Hanbury and Herbert Tree walked in.

"My God! isn't that awful!" Tree exclaimed, as he caught sight of the portrait, and as he spoke Lily saw that Mrs Butt was making a face at her. Thinking that this was merely an added expression of disgust at the unfortunate portrait, she hastened to agree. "Yes, I know, Mrs Butt," she said. "It *is* rather appalling, isn't it?"

But, sad to say, the artist responsible for the drawing was sitting close by, and Mrs Butt's grimace had been intended as a warning to Lily not to pursue the subject!

Unfortunately the damage was done, and Clara received a letter next day from the luckless artist, saying, "Do, please, let me alter it!"

All Clara Butt's sisters developed good voices as they grew up, and Clara made herself responsible for their training. She sent the two elder girls, Pauline, a soprano, and Ethel, a contralto, to Henry Blower at the Royal College of Music, and afterwards to Madame Clara Novello-Davies for a course of diction (of which she was a wonderful teacher), before taking them on tour with her. As "Pauline and Ethel Hook" she brought them out at her concerts as duettists; and also introduced Ethel, the contralto, to the London public at one of her big Albert Hall concerts. Ethel sang on this occasion one of her famous sister's favourites, *Caro mio ben*, with *Absent* as encore, and was very successful.

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Pauline and Ethel also gave a recital of solos and duets at the Bechstein (now Wigmore) Hall.

Hazel, the youngest sister, in her turn developed a very beautiful contralto, and Clara sent her to Hilda Wilson, a Bristol teacher, afterwards introducing her to Arthur Boosey, who engaged her for the London Ballad Concerts, where she made her *début*.

Liza Lehmann composed a quartette, *The Birth of the Flowers*, for the four sisters. It is a clever composition, in which the voices are so blended that it is almost impossible to distinguish them, until Clara, the 'bass,' comes in and holds 'low C' for several bars! They sang it at one of Clara's Albert Hall concerts with great success, and it had and has also great popularity as a gramophone record. Another quartette written for them by the same composer was *Stay, Little Wave!*

Both Pauline and Hazel abandoned the concert platform when they married. Madame Novello-Davies also taught Fred Butt, who had a fine baritone voice, and sometimes took Kennerley Rumford's place on Clara's tours.

In 1899, having been approached by Wolfson, the New York agent, Clara Butt paid her first visit—a short but sensational one—to Canada and the United States.

She went almost unheralded, and the effect she produced in the hypercritical United States, no less than in Canada, even exceeded what those who knew her had anticipated. The Press discovered, to use their own phrase, that a new star of the first magnitude had arisen, and she was acclaimed as "the majestic English beauty," the "greatest contralto of the generation," and her voice described as "without parallel," "a patrician

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voice," and "the noblest voice before the public." Her personality won her audiences as it had in England, and she was greeted with some remarkable demonstrations.

After her first appearances in the Carnegie Hall, Pittsburg, the report of the concert said, "The audience was completely overmastered, and rose to its feet in its desire to manifest the tremendous earnestness of its appreciation." On another occasion, the Society audience before which she was singing is described as having "thrown away the dignity that attends Society" in its enthusiasm when she "poured herself forth in Gluck's *aria*." And on yet another she was encored twelve times after one item, and sang a different song each time.

Her "personal magnetism," her "irresistible temperament," and last but not least "her wonderful art," all won eulogies from the critics; and on her departure one of them wrote, "She came as a stranger from another country, but now she carries the hearts of the people with her wherever she goes."

The South African War was in progress during her visit, and patriotic feeling in Canada—whence a contingent had just been sent to the front—was running high. The night after her sensational success at Toronto she attended a meeting addressed by that stirring speaker Dr G. R. Parkin, Principal of Upper Canada College, who, when the Queen's portrait had been thrown on the screen, said, amid a storm of patriotic cheering, "It is pleasant to know that we have with us one whom the Queen dearly loves—Miss Clara Butt," and pointed to the box where she sat.

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She was deeply moved with her first realization of that greater love of country which is born only from acquaintance with its empire—the knowledge that drew from Kipling the line,

And what should they know of England who only
England know ?

—and she rose from her seat and sang *God save the Queen*. The whole audience of 4500 people sang it with her, and there was a scene of the greatest patriotic fervour, long remembered throughout the country.

It is interesting to note that the fact of her having been the unconscious inspiration of Trilby must have been known in America; for a writer in a review remarks, “She comes to us in the shape of Du Maurier’s inspiration. The Trilby of real life, musically speaking —Clara Butt!”

During her visit to New York she was paid the highest compliment possible in the American world of music. She was engaged to sing at the Albert Morris Bagby recitals (held at the Waldorf Hotel at 11.30 in the morning). At these recitals only artists of worldwide fame were invited to perform, and an appearance there gave a *cachet* almost equal to a command to sing before Royalty.

There had come a time, about a year after her return from the Continent, when a certain young baritone, by name Robert Kennerley Rumford, was admitted to the charmed circle of Clara Butt’s friends.

The new baritone, who was just then beginning to attract notice, was born at Hampstead in 1870, and went as a small boy to St John’s Wood School. Here



CLARA BUTT SHORTLY BEFORE HER MARRIAGE

Photo W. D. Downey

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he won youthful distinction on the cricket-field, part of which in after-years became his own garden. He won a scholarship for King's School, Canterbury, where he excelled at all sports, and, on leaving, entered his father's business. He was sent to Frankfurt to study German, and there lived in rooms with a son of Edward Lloyd. They shared a great musical enthusiasm, and visited Paris, Berlin, and Vienna together in order to attend operas and concerts. Young Rumford was in great demand among his friends as an amateur singer, and Mrs Dewar, a friend at whose house he sang in Paris, urged him to go and sing to Sbriglia, the famous teacher of Jean de Reszke. He did so, and was strongly advised to adopt singing as a profession. There was some parental opposition at first, but it was soon withdrawn; and Robert and his father went together to consult George Henschel, who endorsed Sbriglia's opinion. Study with Alfred Blume followed, and the new baritone very soon attracted attention in London. Tosti became interested in him, and Maude Valérie White wrote *Three Little Songs* for him. Of these he soon made *When the Swallows homeward fly* one of the most popular and delightful of English ballads. The composer chose him to sing her *Devout Lover* to Arthur Chappell (founder of the Monday and Saturday 'Pops'), who gave him one of his first important engagements. In 1897 he was commanded to Osborne to sing to Queen Victoria, who presented him with the Diamond Jubilee Medal, and autographed copies of her *Journal of our Life in the Highlands*. He was often commanded to sing to her Majesty afterwards, usually at her birthday-parties.

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Kennerley Rumford had first heard Clara Butt by chance, at a concert at St James's Hall at which he had dropped in to hear Plunket Greene, for whom he had a great admiration. He sought an introduction to her shortly afterwards at an 'At Home' at Madame Blumenthal's, and they met again one evening when she had been singing at the Grafton Galleries—though it has to be confessed that on this occasion she mistook him for some one else!

There can surely never have been before so subtle, so artistically charming a musical courtship. Little wonder that the mere hint of it intrigued the warm-hearted public's imagination. Kennerley Rumford joined Clara Butt on her provincial tours in 1898 and 1899, and at his suggestion they often sang duets, many of which, as their custom of singing together became established, were written specially for them by various well-known composers. In those days it was customary for singers to hold their music, and in this Kennerley Rumford discovered as pretty a means of courtship as was ever placed in the hands of happy lover! He would pencil little messages in the margins, often in German, lest they be seen by prying eyes for whom they were not intended. These were to greet Clara (at times rather to her embarrassment) as, standing beside him on the platform, she turned the page. Night after night she would find a fresh one, pasted neatly over the old. Day after day, week after week, this artist-wooer patiently laid siege to the heart of his lady through the songs that they both loved. Then, after perhaps a year of this, Fate, who dearly loves a

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lover, placed in his way a little old English ballad *The Keys of Heaven*. It was arranged for them as a duet by both their friends Samuel Liddle and "Freddy" Sewell (one or other of whom was always their accompanist on tour), and speedily became so popular that a concert was seldom allowed to close without it.

If, before, he had found an ideal means of communication, here, in *The Keys of Heaven*, was the perfect medium of proposal. He had to play the ardent lover in the song; in heaven's name why not turn make-believe into reality? Time after time he made it clear to the dark-eyed enchantress that his impassioned entreaty was an appeal not to the actress but to the woman; and at last, one afternoon, she gave him the answer he wanted, as they sang the last verse, and accepted "the keys of his heart" from the real suitor, as well as from the stage lover.

The audience was quite unconscious of the pretty comedy that was being played out right under its eyes, and little knew that their favourites had left the platform an engaged couple. But the news soon leaked out, and when, a day or two later, Clara Butt came on to sing, *They say that when the nightingale his mate has found*, for which, as he occasionally did, Kennerley Rumford acted as accompanist, she was greeted with an outburst of cheering and applause even beyond that to which she was accustomed, and was genuinely puzzled until the explanation dawned upon her.

When the engagement was formally announced the public's delight was manifest, and the event attracted as much notice in the Press as a Royal betrothal.

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Congratulations poured in from all ranks of society, from the highest to the lowest, for the people had adopted Clara Butt as their own, and it seemed that there were none but regarded her happiness as a matter quite personal to themselves.

During their courtship the two singers often stayed as fellow-guests at Saxmundham, the home of the Hon. Ivo Bligh, where their friends who were 'in the know' watched and warmly encouraged the gradual unfolding of the romance.

After their marriage they had an amusing experience at Cobham Hall, Kent, where the Earl and Countess of Darnley gave a house-party just after the Hon. Ivo Bligh's succession to the title.

By some curious loophole in the late Earl's will his widow had assumed possession of all the furniture, and when the new owners arrived they found the old house stripped almost bare. Great patches on the walls showed where pictures had been removed, and chairs, tables, sofas, ornaments, china, and cutlery had disappeared. But the house-party was invited, and the host had no intention of putting the guests off. These duly arrived, and entered with spirit into the situation. Makeshifts of all kinds were devised: jam-jars took the place of candlesticks, and kitchen knives and forks and tablecloths appeared in the stately dining-room. There was no fear of *that* party being a 'sticky' one, and probably there was never one more genuinely enjoyed. But all the same, similar plans for their guests' entertainment are scarcely likely to be adopted by anxious hostesses!

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After their marriage the Rumfords stayed several times at Netherby Hall, as the guests of Lady Cynthia Graham, who was present at one of their concerts at Carlisle, where Clara fainted on the platform. She drove afterwards to their hotel, and insisted upon carrying them off to her home, where Clara remained in her care for some time before her first baby, her daughter Joy, was born.

Clara Butt was paid the supreme honour of the offer of St Paul's Cathedral for her wedding—an honour almost unprecedented for a commoner ; but she refused it, in order to be married in Bristol, among her own people and the friends of her girlhood. The Dean of Bristol then came forward with the offer of Bristol Cathedral (in which only one wedding had previously taken place within a century) for the ceremony. The offer was accepted, and the date fixed for Tuesday, June 26, 1900.

It was the signal for a demonstration that is probably unique. Certainly it must be the most remarkable commoner's wedding on record. Not even Royalty could hope for more spectacular evidence of popularity, and here was none of the glamour that surrounds Royalty to account for it. Just a simple Bristol girl, with a lovely voice, and the whole city was turned upside-down to do her honour ; factories, shops, and offices were given a half-holiday, all the church-bells set ringing, streets blocked, a cathedral crammed with duchesses, *prima donnas*, and what not, special trains to London, a citizens' presentation, another from the Handel Festival Choir, and hundreds of presents, including one from the Queen ! A historic wedding indeed !

The day before the marriage a deputation headed by

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Sir Robert Symes, ex-Mayor of the city, waited upon Clara, who was staying with her parents, and presented her with a wedding-gift which had been subscribed for by the citizens of Bristol, as a token of their pride and affection. The gift was a large brooch formed by the initials "C.B.," standing for her own name and for the City of Bristol, in diamonds, transfixcd by a ruby arrow. It remains one of her favourite ornaments, and is familiar to all who know her upon the platform.

The hour of the wedding was 1.30, but before seven in the morning the beginning of a crowd (which later became so dense that the police had to clear a way for the trams to pass through it) began to collect, armed with campstools and sandwiches, outside the cathedral. It grew and grew until College Green became a solid mass of people, one of the densest crowds ever seen in Bristol; and when at last, after the five hundred guests had been admitted, the cathedral doors were opened to the public, there was a rather disorderly scene. The excited crowd elbowed and swayed, women screamed, and of those that struggled into the building many were hatless and with clothes badly torn. The doors were closed when the cathedral was full to suffocation, and thousands were left outside, knocking vainly and clamouring for admission.

The ceremony was performed by the Dean of Bristol (Dr Pigou), Canon Griffith, and the Rev. S. W. Fischell. Sir Arthur Sullivan was to have played the organ, but was prevented at the last moment by illness. His place was taken by Dr Buck and Cyril Rootham, son of the bride's first teacher, who played the wedding-march.

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Sir Arthur Sullivan wrote a special anthem (*O God, Thou art worthy to be praised*) for the occasion, and it was sung by Madame Albani. The last hymn—the words of which were written by Vera Thompson, an Australian girl, one of two sisters who were the bride's neighbours at Hyde Park Mansions—was sung to the same composer's tune to *Onward, Christian Soldiers*.

The bridesmaids were the bride's three sisters, Pauline, Ethel, and Hazel; the Hon. Dorothy Bligh; Miss Lily Hanbury; and Miss Marjorie Allix. Two little boys, Ivor Novello and Bernard Green, were pages. Mr R. M. Castle was best man, and Messrs Cyril Streatfield and Leigh Ibbs, groomsmen.

Among the guests were Albani, Belle Cole, Melba, Clara Novello-Davies, Edward Lloyd, Ben Davies, Mr and Mrs Kendal, Forbes-Robertson, Andrew Black, and many other distinguished musicians and actors, and innumerable social celebrities, side by side with the humbler friends of the bride's early days. Most of the famous singers present sat in the choir-stalls, and joined heartily in the hymns.

The wedding-presents included the one from the Queen already mentioned, two diamond ornaments from the Handel Festival Choir (with which Clara had sung on the Saturday before the wedding), and a portrait of Kennerley Rumford by Herkomer, from the artist.

Every newspaper in England gave prominence to the wedding. Not only was it a big social event, but it had disturbed the equilibrium of a great city; and as such it was 'news' of a kind that did not often come the way of the happy reporters!

CHAPTER XII

Family Cares—Two Great Farewells—Death of Queen Victoria—
A Windsor Concert—Melba's Advice—Off to Australia—A
Colonial Mail-bag—South Africa—European Concerts—'Klary
Buttové'—More German Experiences—The Shadow of War
—A World-tour

AFTER her marriage, public sentiment seemed to entwine itself even more closely around Clara Butt. A national figure before, she had become pre-eminently the English national singer. It was as though she now stood for something more, for an ideal of the simple domestic joys and virtues so near to the British heart.

With her husband she toured England again and again, and they found themselves received with an even deeper warmth of affection than had been hers before marriage. So the years flew happily by while "Madame Clara Butt," as she was now called, alternated her artistic and social triumphs with domestic cares and interests.

On their return from their Norwegian honeymoon the bride and bridegroom had settled down for a time in Kennerley Rumford's flat in Montagu Mansions, moving later to Compton Lodge, South Hampstead, their present home. There their three children, Joy, Roy, and Victor, were born; and for some years, although a return visit to America and a tour of the British Empire were eagerly awaited, no foreign trips were undertaken.

But they assisted at many events of special interest



WITH HER FIRST BABY, JOY, BORN 1901

Photo Window and Grove



CLARA BUTT

at home. Queen Victoria died on January 22, 1901, and Clara sang *Abide with me* at the memorial service at Kensington Palace Chapel.

Edward Lloyd retired a few months after the Rumfords' wedding, and gave his farewell concert in the Albert Hall on December 12, 1900. He was assisted by a number of his old friends in the profession, and the programme was a notable one. Those who took part were Albani, Evangeline Florence, Clara Butt, Sarah Berry, Ben Davies, Santley, Plunket Greene, Kennerley Rumford, Lane Wilson, Johannes Wolff, Gertrude Peppercorn, F. A. Sewell, and H. R. Bird, as well as the Richter Orchestra, with Sir Edward Elgar and Wilhelm Ganz conducting. Edward Lloyd himself gave only one item, Wagner's *Prize Song* from *Die Meistersinger*.

He emerged from his retirement at his quiet country home near Brighton only once—on October 18, 1902, when he sang at one of Clara Butt's concerts at the Albert Hall. This was in fulfilment of a promise made to her and her husband at their wedding, when, as he told them of his intended retirement from the platform, he added that he would 'come out' again once, and once only, to sing for them, and for no one else.

On this, his last appearance in public as a soloist (he was a member of Clara Butt's choir of 'stars' at her Red Cross concert in 1916), he sang three items—Schubert's *Through the Night*, Gounod's *Lend me your Aid*, and Clay's *I'll sing thee Songs of Araby*; and joined Clara Butt, Kennerley Rumford, and Bertha Rossow in the quartette *Un di si ben* from *Rigoletto*.

Santley also said his farewell to the public a few years

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later, in May 1907. This too was a fine celebration, and a magnificent tribute to the "grand old man of song" and to his art. Those who took part were Albani, Clara Butt, Ada Crossley, Ben Davies, Édouard de Reszke, Kennerley Rumford, Kreisler, W. H. Squire, the London Symphony Orchestra under Sir Landon Ronald, and Charles Santley himself. The Prince and Princess of Wales were present. The veteran singer in whose honour the concert had been promoted sang one of his most famous songs, *I rage, I melt, I burn*, and was greeted with a storm of cheers which ceased only when he put up his hand to implore silence.

Clara Butt took part in the Elgar Festival at Covent Garden in 1904, singing the *Sea Pictures*. Richter was the conductor.

Elgar's *Coronation Ode* was written for her, and she was to have sung it at the Coronation Celebration at Covent Garden, following the accession of King Edward. The coronation and all its attendant functions were, however, postponed on account of the King's serious illness, and the concert was eventually given in the Albert Hall. The King and Queen were present, and, in addition to the *Ode*, Clara Butt also sang *The Lost Chord*, by special request of the Queen.

She lost an old and valued friend a few months after her marriage. Sir Arthur Sullivan had been prevented by illness from attending her wedding, and she had not seen him since she visited him with her *fiancé* soon after their engagement. He died on November 22, 1900; and the funeral service was held at the Chapel Royal, St James's Palace.

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The first concert at which Clara Butt sang at Windsor after King Edward and Queen Alexandra came to the throne was a magnificent affair, and the artists were the biggest stars of the musical firmament—Kreisler, Clara Butt, Melba, and Tosti. Sir Walter Parratt, who was organist at the Chapel Royal, and now also possessed the picturesque, historic title, Master of the King's Musick, when commanded to engage Clara Butt asked her, according to custom, for a list of songs to be submitted to their Majesties. She sent it, including, as a matter of course, *The Lost Chord*, which had been Queen Alexandra's favourite since her student days, and which, it was an understood thing, must be included in her Windsor programme whenever she sang there.

When, however, the list was returned *The Lost Chord* was crossed off; and Clara Butt, knowing that the Queen would not have crossed out her own favourite song, guessed that Sir Walter must have done it himself, and that the little incident was an echo of that day long ago when she 'cheeked' him in the College concert-hall!

As she saw no reason why the Queen should be deprived of the song she loved just to foster some one else's ancient private quarrel, she wrote insisting on singing *The Lost Chord*, adding a request to have the organ with it. Sir Walter said this was impossible; and though she wrote again, asking if it could not somehow be managed, as it seemed a pity that the Queen in her own house should not be allowed to hear the song at its best, as any of her subjects could at a concert, the Master remained adamant.

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She sang it, with piano accompaniment, and after the concert was over the Prince of Wales (now King George) came up to her and said, "By Jove! How wonderful that *Lost Chord* was! But why ever didn't you have the organ?"

Clara explained that she had been told that it was impossible.

"Impossible? Who said it was impossible?" asked the Prince.

"Well, sir, perhaps you can guess," replied Clara, hesitating a little.

"Was it that——?" began the Prince. Then hastily clapping his hand to his mouth, "I *beg* your pardon!"

"Not at all, sir," she replied, laughing. "I'm afraid I quite agree with what you were going to say. It certainly did seem curious that I couldn't have the organ at Windsor, of all places in the world, and that her Majesty couldn't hear that song accompanied as it ought to be."

The Prince's blue eyes flashed. "Absurd!" he said. "Why, there's an organ in the very next room."

At this time the Rumfords' first Australian tour was being mooted, and the subject was discussed by the artists in the special train returning to town. Melba naturally, being Australian, was particularly interested.

"So you're going to Australia?" she said. "Well, I made twenty thousand pounds on my tour there, but of course *that* will never be done again. Still, it's a wonderful country, and you'll have a good time. What are you going to sing?"

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Australian audiences, it is interesting to note, proved as appreciative of the classical items which both Clara Butt and Kennerley Rumford invariably included in their programmes as of the more popular type of songs and ballads; and among the usual innumerable 'special requests' that reached them, quite a large proportion were for such classics as Giordani's *Caro mio ben*, Handel's *Lascia ch'io pianga*, *Where'er you walk*, and songs by Schumann and Schubert, etc.

The Rumfords, with their party—which was not only a concert-party, but included also the three children and their nurses, and luggage to the tune of forty trunks or so—finally sailed from Tilbury on July 25, 1907, in the *Mongolia*, with an enormous crowd to see them off in London, and another at the dock.

They gave a concert on board in aid of nautical charities, and arrived at Adelaide in glorious spring weather.

Accustomed though Clara Butt inevitably was, by this time, to her tremendous popularity, the sensational nature of her reception in warm-hearted Australia was a revelation. Wireless messages by the dozen, and letters by the score, greeted her arrival. With her husband she was elected to honorary membership of clubs and societies innumerable, and snowed under with invitations from Governors, Premiers, Lord Mayors, and public and private bodies of every description. They were besieged with requests to open bazaars and buildings, to present prizes to budding musicians, and to make speeches upon every possible and impossible subject and occasion.

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So universal was the desire to hear them that as many as fifteen or eighteen concerts had to be given in places at which originally arrangements had been made for only one or two; and if the wish of every one who asked if they could possibly spare "one quiet half-hour" had been gratified, the visitors would have had to stay in the dominion for years!

Not only were there crowds at the concerts and at the stations to meet them, but people came for miles to railway-sidings to see their train go through; mothers brought their babies and waited outside concert-halls so that Clara Butt might see and smile at them; and the strangest of letters reached her from the maimed, the halt, the deaf, the dumb, and the blind, appealing, some blatantly and some pathetically (but very few in vain), to the goodness of her heart.

All sorts of things were named after her, from roses and racehorses to soaps, perfumes, and iced sundaes, and the general desire to do her honour took some rather strange forms. Having responded, for instance, to a request that she would present a trophy—to be named after her, of course—to a Ladies' Kennel Club, she was informed that, Melba having donated a similar trophy for bulldogs, they had decided to allot hers to the female class of the same breed, and to call it "The Butt Trophy for Best Bull Bitch." It was a peculiar compliment, but certainly an alluringly alliterative one.

But there were penalties attached to some of these compliments, as witness the following letter:

Seeing that your name has been inscribed on the Scroll of Famous Women at our Women's Work Exhibition, it is justly

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considered by the majority of the committee that you should leave some substantial token of the favour shown to you.

A not uncommon method of soliciting favours, after all, but rather more lacking in subtlety than most. The writer, however, tried to make things as pleasant as possible, for she concluded, "You could do this by giving a concert for the Women's Hospital, or any way you like best."

There is nothing like asking, but in this case it wasn't necessary. The Rumfords gave a concert, the entire profits of which were distributed among the various Sydney charities.

At Penfold's, the big South Australian wine-growers, she opened a new cellar. There was a prettily designed little ceremony, at which the doors opened in response to the pulling of a cord, and Clara Butt was enveloped in a shower of roses. The proprietors, in their invitation, said that they had cellars for vats, but none for 'Butts,' so would she open one for them?

It is impossible not to smile at many of the letters that were addressed to Clara Butt and Kennerley Rumford by their colonial admirers. Nevertheless, the sentiment behind most of them was so obviously genuine that they were often pathetic as well as amusing.

An old bushman wrote :

I have just returned from hearing you sing *Abide with me*. How can I thank you? I have roughed it for twenty-eight years in the Australian bush (perhaps you don't know what that means?) and your song has taken me back to my mother's knee. I still feel the thrill of your voice and the beauty of your rendering. Surely God has blessed you infinitely in giving you this power to lift others out of the gloom.

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Here is a letter from an invalid girl :

The happiest hours I have ever known were spent listening to you. And since hearing you I have been able to look on the world in a different light.

A Sydney admirer wrote :

I have heard the world's greatest singers, but I never found the ideal my imagination had pictured until I heard you both. Then my dream was realized.

Another said :

You seem to be on a pedestal that no one else could reach. Your voice rouses, soothes, bewitches, and calms. . . .

An up-country resident, who had received a signed photograph of both singers in response to a request, wrote :

After the death of our only boy I was at a loss to find something to divert my wife. She had been counting for months on hearing you—and just as you came we lost the boy, and she could not go. . . . Later she asked me to try to get your photos. . . . You cannot imagine the effect of receiving them. The house had been in gloom for weeks, but there was a delightful break in it, and for the first time for many weeks our piano was opened again. Please accept my warmest thanks.

A distressed person, signing himself or herself "A Christian," wrote to Kennerley Rumford :

I was very sorry to hear the *Four Serious Songs* [Brahms] with a spurious meaning, which you sang last night. Brahms altered the words to suit his unbelieving mind. I thought what a pity to stand before an audience and proclaim a false doctrine. I was sure you could not know the terrible wrong you were doing.



DAME NELLIE MELBA AND DAME CLARA BUTT AT MELBOURNE

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The writer proceeded to quote the Scriptures at length to illustrate the penalties that would inevitably overtake the singer if he did not mend his ways and words.

Australia got a rather nasty 'knock' in the following assertion, evidently from a disgruntled person not over-much in love with his or her adopted country :

Your happy married life is an English example to the careless and indifferent Australian.

Here are two other compliments :

I would not advise anyone suffering from insomnia to hear you. After each of your concerts I have spent a sleepless night. Your personality is strangely haunting.

We now have the world's greatest singer in the divine Clara, as we had the world's greatest actress in the divine Sarah.

The following will amuse Australians, as an example of the eternal strife between the states :

I trust that you were satisfied with your reception here in the West [Perth, W.A.]. We take nothing on trust from the eastern states—having had experience of some ghastly impostors. But I think you will admit that when we *are* pleased we are not behind in showing it.

A Melbourne lady recalled a Sunday afternoon service at the Colston Hall, Bristol, at which she had heard Clara Butt, as a girl of seventeen, sing *Ora pro Nobis*.

A former member of the Handel Festival Choir, now living in Sydney, addressed her as "one who though passing through a glorious career, yet remains a noble wife and mother and the ideal of a good woman."

Melba wrote in pencil on the back of an envelope :

Could you sing something Scotch for my daddy ?

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The following was rather an original request :

I am a boy of sixteen, and all my wish is to possess a good pigeon gun, and I beg and hope you will kindly make me a present of one and make me for ever happy as I intend to be the Champion Pigeon Shot of Australia as you are the Champion Singer.

Said another writer :

You seemed like some divinity stepping down from heavenly spheres to bid us struggle on.

Your singing has changed my life.

A number of letters ended with "God bless your voice."

A Sydney admirer, speaking of a friend, said :

There were tears in his hardened old eyes after hearing you sing *Abide with me*, and he said that it did him more good to hear you than all the churches.

A genuinely pathetic letter, too long to quote, came from a little crippled girl who had been on her back for eleven years. She asked Clara Butt to wave her hand from the window as her train passed the backyard of the writer's home ; she was to be wheeled out in her chair to see her. A second letter rapturously acknowledged one from the singer, and said that she "could not get out because the rain had made it like a bog and my chair stuck, but my bed was pulled to the window, and I think I just caught a glimpse of you." The letter was signed "Your devoted little friend who has never heard you."

Many letters towards the end of the tour asked for "one of your evening dresses now you have finished with them."

Melba went *incognito* to Australia at the same time

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as the Rumfords, and was present at their opening concert in Melbourne, and entertained them afterwards at a supper-party.

In 1911 the Rumfords went to South Africa, and there, as in Australia, they were given a right royal reception. On arrival at Cape Town they stayed with Sir Henry Scobell, who occupied the house formerly built by Cecil Rhodes, and presented to Rudyard Kipling. At Johannesburg Sir Lionel Phillips, one of the most famous of the Rand millionaires, invited them to make their headquarters at his lovely home "Arcadia," with its wonderful gardens, where ninety gardeners are employed, and they did so for weeks at a time, while they were fêted on every side, and entertained by another well-known South African plutocrat, Sir Abe Bailey, as well as by many others.

At Pretoria they were the guests of Lord and Lady Methuen.

In addition to their concerts in the large towns they appeared also at some of the smaller ones, where they had some amusing experiences. On one occasion they were persuaded to give a concert in a small town where there was no hall nearly big enough for their purpose. There Clara Butt had the odd experience of being held up in a big crowd which had spread right across the street, listening to her own gramophone records. She said, "I don't suppose they'll bother to come and hear me if they can hear me outside"; but they did, and the hall, such as it was, was crowded out. Numbers were unable to get in, so the gramophone came into its own again. When she returned to the hotel she found the

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overflow in the lounge blissfully listening to a "Clara Butt Song Recital" on records newly arrived in Africa by the same steamer as herself.

At a concert in Johannesburg, one very hot summer's night, the doors all round the hall were left wide open. Perhaps the dogs of the Rand are especially musical, for dog after dog strolled in and lay down, until there was a whole row, noses on paws, in front of the platform, where they had the benefit of a slight breeze from the open doors as well as of the music. The effect was so utterly absurd that the singers were hopelessly disconcerted, and stopped singing to join in a roar of laughter with the audience.

In one of the South African cities the local "musical critic," who, as is so often, alas, the case, possessed more self-assurance than musical knowledge, 'fell in' rather delightfully. He had dealt in a high-handed manner with the other artists and their items, and came to Harold Craxton, the pianist. "This young pianist played well," he was good enough to say; "but we cannot say that we care for this modern music. He gave us a great deal of Brahms—and, after all, what *are* Brahms?" Probably he is still seeking enlightenment.

At Johannesburg, where the generous folk of the "Gold City" laid themselves out to give their visitors a good time, a great native war-dance was organized for their entertainment at the Robinson Deep gold-mine. Clara Butt's height evidently greatly impressed the Kaffirs; and, whether in alarm, or by way of expressing his admiration, she never knew, one chief, armed with spear and shield, and all the paraphernalia of war, gave

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one startled look at her, leapt his full height into the air, and landed at her feet.

Although South African musical taste is quite up to the average, and the Rumfords never found their audiences lacking in appreciation of classical numbers, they discovered at least one concert-goer who was prepared to back his preference for English music—whether classical or otherwise he apparently did not care. He wrote :

If Messrs J. and N. Tait will arrange that no foreign songs are sung at the two last Butt-Rumford concerts, the instigator of this will pay fifty pounds to any charitable institutions which they may care to name in the personal column of the *Cape Times* of December 5 ; and the receipt or receipts will be sent to them subsequently.

Another specimen from the South African mail-bag may be quoted, in order that the Australians may not be supposed to have had it all their own way in the matter of poetic compliment. The writer, addressing Clara Butt, said :

I think that if Nature could speak, she would have a voice like yours. It suggests all her splendid forces—the flow of a mighty river, the wind in a forest—with the crowning glory of a great human heart.

The final incident of their stay in the Union was a picturesque climax to the hospitality that had been showered upon them by the kindly South Africans. Their host, Sir Henry Scobell, had come down to the dock at Cape Town with them to see them off ; and after he had left the ship, and Clara Butt had retired to her cabin, she found that it had been tastefully lined and re-decorated in pale blue, the bunk removed and replaced

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by a pretty oak bedstead — as a parting ‘surprise’ from the Governor. She was able to send a little note of thanks ashore to him before the ship finally sailed ; but received news on arrival in England of his death, a few days after they had left South Africa.

The bedstead is still in use at Compton Lodge.

In 1912 they gave concerts in several of the European capitals, visiting Prague, among other places. Here Clara Butt’s name was advertised in its Bohemianized form, “Klary Buttové,” which drew from the *Daily Telegraph* the following entertaining comment :

Who is the most popular English contralto ? Surely —— ! But no. We cannot bring ourselves to answer so delicate and invidious a conundrum. Is it Miss —— ? Or can it be Madame —— ? Again our courage fails us. Still, there can be no harm in giving the name of the lucky artist who, according to the Prague papers, enjoys that signal honour. Strange to say, the name is one which not a single concert-goer in this country has ever heard. Which only shows how little they know of our contraltos “who only England know.” And now to end suspense and reveal the name of the incomparable one. It is “Buttové.” And christened she was by the pretty name of “Klary.” How, oh, how comes it, you ask, that the greatness and glory of Klary Buttové, “the famous English contralto,” are known only in a foreign country ? The answer is simple. Because Klary Buttové, in her native land, chooses for some reason to be known by the comparatively unromantic name of — Clara Butt. Whereas the other day she went to Prague, gave a concert, and woke up to find herself famous as “Klary Buttové.” And to his intense and inexpressible chagrin, Mr Kennerley Rumford, who of course shared in the triumphs of the *porad*, remained unBohemianized. Clearly this was favouritism—or a sign of weakness in the Prague translator.

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Soon after her marriage the Kaiser had cabled to Clara Butt, asking her to sing at a huge choral and orchestral concert to be given with the Stuttgart Choir in Berlin. But her bookings—with the innumerable “First appearances since her marriage,” demanded by the provinces—were so many and so difficult to cancel that she had reluctantly to refuse.

It was not until many years later that she renewed her acquaintance with the German Royal family, though one of the Kaiser’s sisters had corresponded regularly with her since their previous meetings. Again her health was breaking down from the effects of overwork. A rest-cure was ordered, and she decided that this could take no better form than the one that had proved so successful once before. She resolved upon a quiet, *incognito* visit to Berlin, where, undisturbed, she could rest and study, and try to recapture some of the fine fervour of her student days. So, alone but for her maid, she went over, and stayed quietly at the Adlon Hotel, visiting no one except her old friend, Etelka Gerster, with whom she resumed her lessons.

She carefully kept her visit secret from the Royal family, for she well knew that if she did not there would be little rest-cure for her. But two days before she left, and the day before her car was to be shipped back to England, she suddenly decided to make one last use of it by driving out to Potsdam, feeling that she had not the heart to leave without seeing her kind friend the Baroness von Gerstoff.

As she drove up to the palace, the Kaiserin and her daughter, Princess Victoria, came out without seeing

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her, and, entering the carriage that was waiting, drove away. Clara then drove up, and asked the servant whether the Baroness was at home. He said he thought not; so Clara sent up her card, on which she wrote a little message, saying that she had been staying in Berlin very quietly without seeing anyone, but could not leave without saying farewell. Then, not wishing to overtake the Kaiserin, who was in a horse-drawn carriage, she halted her car near the entrance. As she was sitting there a footman came hurrying down the drive, to say that the Baroness von Gerstoff was in after all, and wished to see her.

On going in Clara was met more than cordially. "How wonderful to see you!" the lady-in-waiting said. "But how could you be here all that time and never come to see us? And how extraordinary that you should come to-day, because this morning the Kaiserin and I were going through some songs, and came across *Light in Darkness*, and she said how she would love to hear you sing it again. The Kaiser and Kaiserin often speak of you and your singing."

Clara explained her reasons for not having made her presence in Berlin known earlier, and finally took her leave, sending messages of greeting and farewell to the Kaiserin.

Next morning the Baroness von Gerstoff came in hot-foot to Berlin to call on Clara, bearing a diamond brooch from the Kaiserin "to remind her that she had never forgotten her and her lovely voice." The lady-in-waiting was also the bearer of a message from the Kaiser, who wanted Clara to come out and sing to him on the very day—the next but one—that she was leaving.

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Clara was very much perturbed. Her passage was booked, all arrangements made, and her husband meeting her at Calais. What was she to do?

She asked the Baroness whether this was a 'command'; but the lady-in-waiting told her, "No. His Majesty very much wants you to come; you are not, however, to regard it as a 'command,' but to do just as you wish about it." Clara, albeit very regretfully, 'turned down' the Royal invitation. But the Baroness, who was a fine pianist, stayed with her for an hour or so, and played a number of accompaniments for her, before Clara turned her attention again to her preparations for departure.

The next afternoon there came yet another invitation. This time it was a note from the Kaiserin asking Clara to have tea with her. Clara's car having been sent back to England, the Kaiserin sent a carriage for her, with the old Court interpreter, to bring her safely by special train to Potsdam. The Kaiserin explained that the Kaiser would not be at home, as he was going to a banquet to which she was to have gone also; but she was not well, and had excused herself, and could therefore receive her friend. She was also thoughtful enough to add that as Madame Butt would of course be "all packed up," and as besides the weather was very cold, she was excused from wearing a *décolleté* gown, and was to dress quite informally.

Arrived at Potsdam, the Baroness von Gerstoff came to meet her, and on their way up in the lift to the Kaiserin's apartments Clara inquired after the latter's indisposition, adding, "I hope it is not serious?" The lady-in-waiting placed a finger on her lips, and said, "Don't

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worry! She is not very ill, but she wanted so much to hear you again! The Kaiser was rather cross with her for not going with him, but it is quite all right."

A confidential little chat about the Royal family followed, and when Clara said, "You know how I love them; they have been so good to me," the faithful von Gerstoff shook her head sadly. "Ah! I wish every one felt about them as you do," she said. "We are all so unhappy now—there is so much sadness and misunderstanding! If they understood that he wishes only for their good . . . but . . .!"

It was a foreshadowing of what was to come. The old interpreter had hinted at the same thing in the train. Anti-British feeling was growing apace in Germany, and the war-clouds were gathering fast.

In her talks with the Baroness von Gerstoff, as well as from the interpreter, Clara gathered much information that has proved significant in the light of later events. Both attributed at least some of the feeling that was spreading through the country to the tactlessness of Englishwomen who had married and settled in the Fatherland, and who openly showed a preference for English ways and English goods, which naturally gave great offence to the German people. When the Empress Frederick first went over to Germany she was quite unable to forget that she was an English princess; and found it very hard to adopt a new country as her own. So she insisted on ordering all her baby-clothes (they were those for the infant who grew up to be the Kaiser Wilhelm II) from England; and used even to send 'home' for a joint of "old English roast

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beef" for her Christmas dinner. So strong was this influence that it extended to her children, who had not the justification of English birth; and one of the Kaiser's sisters, whom Clara and Kennerley Rumford visited at Potsdam, had had her villa there furnished and decorated throughout by Waring's of London.

These conversations certainly shed an interesting light upon some of the problems that beset those who change their nationality for reasons of state, and on the penalties which must be paid for the proud privileges of royalty.

Clara Butt came in contact with many well-informed persons during her visits to Germany, and she formed the impression that though the Kaiser was rather ridiculed in some quarters for his theatrical methods and personal vanity, yet he was undoubtedly surrounded by those who played up to that vanity for their own ends; and that, though he might seek information and enlightenment upon matters concerning the welfare of his country and his people, it was systematically withheld from him, and he was allowed to know only just as much as his advisers wanted him to know.

Clara sang many songs that evening—all the Kaiserin's old favourites—with her Royal hostess sitting beside her at the piano all the while. Afterwards they had tea quite *en famille*—the Kaiserin, Clara Butt, and Prince Joachim—the ladies-in-waiting sitting at another table.

During tea the Kaiserin sent a message to the nursery to ask about the temperature of one of the Crown Prince's children, who was slightly feverish; and, turning to Clara, she said, "I know you will excuse me, for you are a mother, and understand. I

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feel these children such a responsibility, and get so anxious about them if there is anything wrong."

The Crown Prince and Princess were away in India at the time,¹ and the children were left in their grandmother's charge.

There took place that evening at the Kaiserin's tea-table quite an animated discussion on children and child-management. The Kaiserin said how easy it was to spoil them, and Clara responded that it must be especially hard for a grandmother to avoid it, and she was sure the Kaiserin must spoil the Crown Prince's children upstairs. But the Kaiserin replied, "No, I really don't. Here is an instance. One of them has a habit of refusing to eat up her supper properly. She *will* hold her food in her mouth and not swallow it. But this evening, when the nurses told her to eat it up quickly, because I was coming up to the nursery, she said, 'It's all right, nurse, I *always* eat it up when Granny's here.' " The Kaiserin remarked in passing that this had been said in perfect English, which all the children were taught to speak from babyhood. Clara Butt was particularly interested in the little domestic confidence about the food, because her own small daughter Joy had the same bad habit.

They went on to discuss the joys and responsibilities of grandmotherhood, and Clara remarked that she was "simply longing to be a grandmother," which, in view

¹ The Crown Prince was popularly supposed to have been sent to India because his father was jealous of his popularity, and wanted him out of the way. But Clara Butt was told that the Kaiser had really sent him because he had made a speech in the Reichstag which was derogatory to England. It may have been so—who knows?

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of her children's very tender ages at the time, the Kaiserin seemed to think a little premature!

The last song that Clara Butt sang that night—the last, as it was to prove, that she was ever to sing to the Kaiserin—was *The Lost Chord*; and soon after it was over the Kaiserin, with tears in her eyes, bade her good-night and good-bye. Clara could not quite repress her curiosity to know just how much it was illness that had kept the Empress at home; so, as she expressed her pleasure at having come, she said that her only regret was that she owed her visit to the Kaiserin's inability through illness to fulfil her engagement with the Kaiser.

The Kaiserin smiled. "Anyway," she said, "I am quite well again now—and—you know—it was a *very* good excuse!"

The Empress then retired, and the maids-of-honour carried off the guest to supper, a special basket of grapes being sent down to her by the Kaiserin. Presently the Baroness von Gerstoff, who as head lady-in-waiting had been in attendance on her Royal mistress, appeared, saying that she had been excused from further duties. "And what do you think I've got here?" she asked. "When we got upstairs the Kaiserin went straight to her *escritoire*, and, taking out one of her nicest photographs, autographed it, and said, 'I don't care *who* says I mustn't give her one. She *shall* have one!'" And the lady-in-waiting handed Clara Butt the photograph which now stands among the other Royal portraits in her drawing-room. It is almost certainly the only one that was ever given to a commoner.

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Her refusal to stay another day in Berlin to sing to the Kaiser long remained a matter of regret to Clara Butt, who felt that it had been a rather serious discourtesy to flout the wishes of an emperor, even in favour of those of a husband. So that an incident which took place the following year at a garden-party at St Dunstan's, Regent's Park (then the residence of the Earl and Countess of Londesborough), was all the pleasanter. (The Countess, it may be mentioned in passing, was always known at Monte Carlo as *la grande Comtesse*, and Clara Butt as *la Grande*.)

The Kaiser and Kaiserin had come to London for the unveiling of Queen Victoria's memorial, and were guests at the garden-party, at which Clara Butt and her husband were also present. The Kaiserin and Crown Princess were walking down one of the garden-paths with Princess Christian, when they met Clara Butt. The Royal party stopped and greeted her, and, as they chatted, Clara Butt, hearing some one come up behind her, supposed it was her husband, until, turning as she curtsied, she saw it was the Kaiser. He wagged a roguish finger at her. "You naughty, naughty girl," he said reprovingly. "You came to Potsdam when I wasn't there! You must never do that again!" And then, turning to Kennerley Rumford, who was close by, but whom he had never met in his life before, he proved that he possessed the Royal gift of intuition. "She's looking lovely," he said. "You *do* take good care of her! But you heard me say, didn't you, that she must *never* come to Berlin again without letting me know?"

A rather amusing story was told to Clara Butt later



CLARA BUTT AND KENNERLEY RUMFORD IN THEIR SLEIGH AT OTTAWA, JANUARY 1913

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in connexion with this visit of the German Royalties. The Kaiserin and Princess had arrived in London wearing large 'picture' hats, in the mode of the moment; and, in order that there should not be too great a discrepancy between the millinery of the English and the German Royal ladies, Buckingham Palace had been turned topsy-turvy in a search for something a little larger than the small toque shapes usually in vogue there. And, hurried though the change of fashion had to be, it was noticeable that a slightly larger style *was* adopted for the occasion!

Clara Butt and Kennerley Rumford went to Berlin to give a concert the following winter, and Clara was looking forward eagerly to introducing her husband to the Kaiserin. But though, in common with the rest of the world, they did not realize it, the shadow of war was hovering very near; and the Kaiser and Kaiserin, who had never before missed one of Clara Butt's appearances in Berlin, failed to attend the concert.

They learned afterwards that very strong feeling had been expressed throughout Germany owing to the Royal family's well-known affection for the English singer, and doubtless they had thought it wise to conform to public opinion by withdrawing their favour.

The singers, however, were invited to tea at the palace with the Baroness von Gerstoff, who said that the Kaiserin had a cold and could not receive them. But she confided to Clara Butt that "the Kaiserin is very sad about it," adding sorrowfully, "She is not at all well."

This time it was not a merely opportune 'indisposition,'

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and Clara Butt never saw the Kaiserin again. But she retained pleasant, friendly memories of one who, though fate had made her Empress of Germany, was yet a kindly, loving, human woman.

At the end of 1912 the Rumfords started on their first world-tour, to Canada, the United States, New Zealand, Australia, and Tasmania, and so great was their success in America and Canada that they travelled back from Australia by the same route, and paid return visits. In New York, on the outward journey, Clara Butt was again paid the compliment of an invitation to sing at the Albert Morris Bagby recitals at the Waldorf, and this was repeated at each of her subsequent visits. The Rumford children again accompanied their parents, and the party travelled like royalty, in special saloons. The Canadian and American Press excelled themselves in typical Western exuberance, not only with regard to the visitors' musical abilities, but on personal grounds. One jovial Canadian wound up his 'interview' thus :

. . . Really and truly, s'help me, it makes you feel good to meet a couple so happy, and observing so beautifully the law that the children of the Earth ought to be so!

Another commented appreciatively upon the unusualness of finding a famous singer who was not only willing, but eager, to praise another. He wrote :

I asked after Madame Albani, who is a great favourite over here, and Madame Butt replied eagerly, "Ah! Albani! Yes, I know her so well, and love her so much. She is wonderful! There was never another singer with such a lovely *legato* as hers."

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In Australia they visited a number of the smaller towns, where they had some amusing experiences. They gave one concert in an enormous barn, holding about four thousand people. Carts went round the township all day long, begging for chairs, anything and everything that could be sat upon, and the 'hall' was packed. The audience included most of the dogs of the district, and the manager (Mr Roland Foster, now of the Sydney Conservatorium) spent most of the evening throwing out some of the more fiery spirits among them. Nor did a number of pigeons, settling themselves for the night upon the galvanized-iron roof, add to the peace of mind of the concert-givers.

There was a smallpox scare while the party were in Australia, and they were all vaccinated, every one escaping lightly except Mr Rumford and the manager.

They again tested the musical taste of the Australian public with songs by Handel, Bach, Gluck, Beethoven, Schumann, Schubert, Brahms, Grieg, Hugo Wolf, and Richard Strauss, and all were well received.

A hurried concert was given at Honolulu on the way across the Pacific. It was only announced on the arrival of the ship, which spent but a few hours in port. A man was sent round with a bell, and a huge audience, both brown and white, was soon assembled; excitement ran high, and the singers were weighed down with garlands of hibiscus, which the audience threw over them while they were singing. At the close Clara Butt stood in the midst of a mass of scarlet blossoms through which she could scarcely move.

The whole audience followed the party down to the

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ship, singing and shouting and flinging flowers—a charming and unforgettable demonstration.

The visitors had been taken to the Country Club on arrival and royally entertained. Arrangements had been made for a banquet in their honour after the concert; but time, tide, and ships wait for no man—the captain was adamant, and would not delay his sailing.

They stayed to the very last moment, and the gang-way was pulled up as Clara Butt's foot touched the deck.

It was on this tour also, while crossing between New Zealand and Tahiti, that Clara Butt met Rupert Brooke, who was on his way to visit the island. The acquaintance was begun by her elder little boy, Roy, who came running along the deck to his mother, and said, "Oh, Mother, I've just seen the most *beautiful* man!" The spiritual beauty of that very unusual face had won the child; and it was not long before he had brought the two 'sweet singers' together, and a close and happy friendship sprang up during the voyage.

Brooke joined the Rumfords' party when they went ashore during the ship's stay in port at Tahiti, and they all went up together to the rest-house on the hill, where they danced and sang and 'fooled' light-heartedly, until at last Rupert turned to Clara Butt and implored her to sing. They had no music, of course, but Craxton, the pianist, could play from memory; and she elected to sing *Night Hymn at Sea* with her husband. So there, sitting side by side, with Rupert at their feet, they sang it as, perhaps, they have never sung it before or since—for never can it have been sung in such perfect surroundings. In the lofty room, open all round to the

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A FAMILY PARTY, SYDNEY, 1913

Photo K. B. Cook

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starlit, scented tropic night, faint whiffs of frangipane and a thousand other heavenly perfumes came to them on every tiny puff of breeze. Brown figures came padding noiselessly on bare feet through the trees, to stand entranced in the wide doorways, as the blended voices rose and fell on the dreamy air. The last notes died away, and there was silence save for the whirring of cicadas and a faint undercurrent of tiny sounds, more felt than heard, of bird and insect life.

No one spoke: brown-skinned audience as well as white paid homage in silence, until the dusky figure of a native princess stole noiselessly across the room, and kissed Clara Butt's hand.

"*A-ee!* It was lovely!" she murmured. "I never heard anything so lovely in all my life. It made me feel as if ants were crawling down my back!"

And, ever since, Clara Butt has been wondering whether that is how all her audiences feel, but don't quite like to say so!

Rupert Brooke remained in Tahiti for some months, writing several of his poems there. The Rumfords, however, never saw him again, for he joined up early in the War, and died after a few months' service.

Clara Butt and Kennerley Rumford returned to England in May 1914, and gave a 'reappearance' concert at the Albert Hall in June. It was the last concert they were destined to give there on their own behalf for several years. For the War broke out a few weeks later, and their next appearance in the hall in which they were such familiar figures was at their first great concert in the following autumn, for War charities.

CHAPTER XIII

War !—The Clara Butt Concert Committee—Distressed Artists' Fund—Three Arts Fund—The Red Cross—A Thousand-guinea Box—*Gerontius* Week—Other Activities—The D.B.E.—Kennerley Rumford's War Service—Story of a Jade Bracelet

WHEN she returned to London in the early summer of 1914, fresh from the triumphs of her first world-tour, it seemed as though there could be no further heights for Clara Butt to scale.

But the War, which brought opportunity to so many, brought it also to her; and just as her attainments in peace-time stood out above those of her contemporaries, so did her efforts during the War transcend even the splendid achievements of the other women of England.

She was, of course, peculiarly equipped for the part she played, and nobly she played it. No other woman could have done what she did, because the place she had made for herself in the hearts of the British public was unique, and gave her a power and an influence which she used up to the hilt on behalf of the War's victims. The visible result of her efforts was a cash total running into hundreds of thousands of pounds, with the even more important factor that she had provided employment for hundreds who would otherwise have been penniless, and pleasure for thousands whose anxieties and worries the concerts she organized helped to alleviate.

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The Rumfords were at Slaines Castle, Aberdeenshire—a property they had leased for the autumn—when war broke out; and before returning south they gave several concerts in Scotland for the Red Cross funds.

They then returned home; and Kennerley Rumford offered himself and his new Wolseley car for service with the Red Cross at the Front. But before leaving he joined forces with his wife in a great concert at the Albert Hall, the entire proceeds of which were distributed among various War charities—notably the Queen's Work for Women Fund (to which a cheque for £1700 was sent) and the Three Arts Fund (£350), many other funds receiving £100 or more each.

Clara Butt then announced her intention of devoting the entire proceeds of her autumn tour (which was already booked) to raising funds for the assistance of others less fortunate than herself. She carried out her project—a notable achievement in itself, in those first disorganized months of war, when all other concert tours, even such important ones as the Harrison tour, were abandoned—paid her assisting artists, and found herself with some £14,000 in hand with which to organize her scheme.

At first the money was handled by a committee known as the Clara Butt Concert Committee. This was formed of a number of leading musicians, among whom were Sir Edward Elgar, Sir Henry Wood, Sir Frederic H. Cowen, Sir Landon Ronald, and W. H. Squire. But this method was found too unwieldy, and at Sir Landon Ronald's suggestion the money was banked as the Clara

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Butt-Rumford Fund, with one co-trustee, Mr W. H. Squire, to sign the cheques.

With characteristic sympathy Clara Butt realized from the first that public charitable effort would be concentrated primarily on the more obvious results of the War—the needs of the men at the Front and of the wounded. But she well knew that, unhappily, many others besides those would be in need of help. Her thoughts naturally turned towards the members of her own profession, which of all others—music being a ‘luxury’ and not a “work of national importance” in war-time—must be desperately hard hit in all its ranks. Even singers and instrumentalists of high standing were very soon among the unemployed, since not only had the concerts given in an average week throughout the British Isles fallen from hundreds to *nil*, but social entertaining, which provided engagements for so many, had ceased entirely.

She proceeded to evolve a most ingenious scheme. She organized a series of concerts throughout the United Kingdom, at hospitals, workhouses, asylums, homes for incurables, and other such institutions, paying the artists engaged for the purpose not less than ten guineas a week and expenses. They usually travelled in parties of five, and altogether some two thousand engagements were provided that first winter. Gertrude Blower, a daughter of Clara Butt’s old singing-master, acted as secretary to her in this work.

The scheme was then enlarged; and in addition to the concerts for the inmates of institutions, concert-parties of distressed artists also toured the smaller



PREPARATIONS FOR DAME CLARA BUTT'S DAY IN AID OF THE THREE ARTS WOMEN'S
EMPLOYMENT FUND

Lady Tree, Dame Clara Butt, and Mr C. Guinness in Regent Street with a piano-organ.

Photo Sport and General

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towns of England and Scotland—many of them out-of-the-way places that seldom or never had an opportunity of hearing good music—the proceeds being devoted to the Red Cross funds. These concerts proved immensely successful, as competition was keen between the various towns to swell their respective funds, and support of the concerts was consequently most generous.

Many leading artists accepted engagements on these tours, and the scheme was continued throughout the War period with extraordinary success.

Another of her big efforts, in which she was associated with Miss Constance Collier, Miss Lena Ashwell, Dame May Whitty, and many other devoted and indefatigable workers, was the Three Arts Women's Unemployment Fund, whose object was somewhat similar to that of her own scheme—the assistance and employment of women connected with the 'three arts' who had been adversely affected by the War. This idea grew out of the well-known Three Arts Club, founded many years earlier, of which Clara Butt was one of the foundation members.

Workrooms were opened, in which articles whose handling would not injure the delicate 'touch' of violinists, pianists, and painters were made and sold: toys, dolls, lampshades, mascots, and all such trifles dear to the hearts of women. The workers were paid a regular wage, and provided with meals, funds being provided by the sale of their products. The funds available at first were very slender, and Clara Butt gave a Sunday evening concert at the Queen's Hall to

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augment them, in March 1915. She was assisted by Agnes Nicholls, Sir Herbert and Lady Tree, Robert Radford, Marjorie Hayward, W. H. Squire, and Henry Ainley. A sum of five hundred pounds was raised, including fifty pounds for programmes sold by a bevy of stage favourites under the leadership of Lady Alexander.

The money thus raised enabled the workrooms to enlarge their scope, and the vogue of the 'cuddly doll'—one of the rooms' specialities—coming in at the same time put the scheme in an assured position.

Later on she organized a "Joan of Arc Day" for the same fund. A great Empire *Pageant of Fair Women* was written for the occasion by Louis N. Parker, and was given at the Queen's Hall. In it appeared an imposing array of leading members of the musical and dramatic professions, and of Society, representing every part of the British Empire and its Allies. The part of Britannia was taken by Clara Butt, and her daughter Joy—a tall schoolgirl of fourteen—made her *début* as the Sudan. The pageant was a glittering spectacle, and a magnificent musical and artistic, as well as financial, success. The Queen sent a message of good wishes, and so great was the demand for places that a second performance was given in the same hall a few days later. The arduous duties of honorary secretary to this huge undertaking were carried out by Mrs W. H. Squire.

The pageant was repeated at Chiswick at two *matinées* for Sir Oswald Stoll's War Seal Foundation—a scheme to provide flats for disabled soldiers and their wives and families, at a cost of £600 each. Clara Butt's effort

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enabled her to defray the cost of one of these, which was named after her.

Above all Clara Butt's other undertakings at this time, one was unique from every point of view—her production of Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius* for a whole week in London, following two performances in Leeds, for the Red Cross funds.

It was the only time on record that an oratorio had ever been produced for a definite run, and as a writer in the *Daily Telegraph* said at the time :

Not one person in a hundred behind the scenes thought for a moment that a scheme so unusual and so ambitious as six consecutive performances of such a work as *Gerontius* carried with it the hope of any such success as its merits deserved. But the unexpected happened ; and the result more than realized the hopes of the plucky promoter.

She had other motives in mind in this unusual enterprise besides the obvious one of raising money for a patriotic cause. She had a religious motive as well. She felt it was time that the people who were passing through the sorrows and anxieties of war should hear music that was definitely spiritual, and that English art should try to express the attitude of the English mind to the life after death.

She determined to challenge London with something really beautiful and mystic. "We are a nation in mourning," she said, discussing the project. "In this tremendous upheaval, when youth is dying for us, I want to give the people a week of beautiful thoughts, for I am convinced that no nation can be great that is not truly religious. I believe that the War has given us

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a new attitude towards death, that many who had no faith before are now hungering to believe that after death there is life."

To achieve her end she enlisted the aid of the Leeds Choral Union under Dr Henry (afterwards Sir Henry) Coward, the London Symphony Orchestra, Agnes Nicholls, Gervase Elwes, John Booth, Herbert (afterwards Sir Herbert) Brown, Charles Mott, and Robert Radford, she herself taking the part of the Angel.

She personally selected the choir of angelicals, and sang her part from her place among them. Sir Edward Elgar conducted. At each performance there were also given the same composer's beautiful and impressive *To Women*, and *For the Fallen*. Agnes Nicholls (of whose interpretation Clara Butt said that she "had never heard more perfect singing") and John Booth sang the solo parts in both works.

The King and Queen attended one performance, and Queen Alexandra with King Manoel and Queen Amelie of Portugal another. There was no doubt about public interest in the production, for many were turned away at several of the performances, and the profits, after all expenses were paid (including the Leeds concerts), amounted to £4500.

The influence of the unusual experiment upon musical opinion was demonstrated by another article in the *Daily Telegraph*, suggesting that in view of the success of "Gerontius week," a week each of the *Apostles* and *The Kingdom* might be given in the same way as *Gerontius*, and for the same charity.

The most sensational of Clara Butt's War efforts

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was the huge Red Cross concert at the Albert Hall in May 1916. She paid all expenses, and the whole of the enormous proceeds—some £9000—was handed over to the fund. The Queen wrote a personal note in her own handwriting asking Clara Butt to sing *Abide with me*—to which the King added a line expressing his desire that she should sing *God save the King* in the setting “with the deep notes in it” (Costa’s), with the massed bands. The King and Queen and Princess Mary were present; and in addition to the Royal requests Clara Butt sang *The Lost Chord* and *Land of Hope and Glory*.

The choir of two hundred and fifty voices was unique in musical history, for it was composed entirely of professional singers, among whom was practically every famous singer of the day. Even Madame Albani and the veteran Edward Lloyd had come out of their retirement to assist, all of them having given their services at Clara Butt’s request. The massed bands of the Brigade of Guards played; and Kennerley Rumford appeared in khaki, having obtained special leave of absence from the Front.

Every member of the immense audience was presented on entering with a small white satin flag. These flags they waved in unison as a greeting to the King and Queen, and also during the singing of *Rule, Britannia* by the whole audience, with the massed bands. It was a spectacle which no one who was present will ever forget.

Booking for the concert was astonishing, even for those generous War days. The King headed the list with £100, and before the box-office was officially opened £3000 had been subscribed. The Prince of

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Wales presented the use of his box, asking the promoter to dispose of it as she thought best. She thereupon wired to Mr D. A. Thomas (afterwards Lord Rhondda), a wealthy survivor of the *Lusitania* :

Congratulations on your lucky escape. Will you give me £1000 for the Prince of Wales' box at my Red Cross concert on May 13, and fill it with wounded soldiers ?

It must be confessed that Clara Butt awaited the reply to this modest request with some slight trepidation. But very soon a telegram was handed in at Compton Lodge which read as follows :

Yes certainly. Please fill box as you suggest.

D. A. THOMAS

Another generous supporter paid £500 for a box ; and many sums of £250, £100, and more were paid for places.

A number of wounded men were present as the guests of the King and Queen.

After the audience had left the performers gave an impromptu concert of their own in the empty hall, with a programme of a quite different order. The massed bands struck up *Tipperary*, in which the choir of 'stars' joined as cheerily as any mere workaday chorus, following up with *Here we are, here we are, here we are again ! Little Grey Home in the West*, and other such classics.

Burglars broke into Compton Lodge one night, and stole a batch of cheques sent in payment for seats ; but notices were published in the next morning's papers asking all who had sent cheques during the last few days to stop payment at their bank, so probably the

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thieves' haul was not heavy. Kennerley Rumford, however, bitterly resented the theft, at the same time, of a carefully coloured and beloved meerschaum pipe!

Another impressive scene at the Albert Hall during the same summer was at the concert for wounded soldiers and sailors, organized by Clara Butt's agent, Lionel Powell, and the Columbia Gramophone Company. Clara Butt was the prime mover in the scheme, and headed the list of contributors to the programme, who included Margaret Cooper, Aileen D'Orme, George Robey, and Adeline Génée. The public were not admitted to this concert, which was a free entertainment for wounded men only.

The most elaborate rehearsals were held during the two days preceding the concert. They were not, as might have been supposed, rehearsals of the programme, but practices to ensure perfect handling of the thousands of stretchers upon which the wounded from some two hundred war hospitals were brought into the hall. There were also many hundreds of others who were able to go to their places without assistance.

The magnitude of such an undertaking may be faintly imagined, but it was carried out without a hitch. And the sight of that great mass of blue, relieved only by the uniforms of the nursing sisters (for the whole audience, of course, was in hospital blue), was one of the most beautiful, and certainly the most touching, that has ever been seen in that vast building.

A concert in Westminster Abbey for the blinded soldiers from St Dunstan's was organized by Clara Butt and Sir Frederick Bridge. It was a scene of peculiar

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interest and most poignant pathos. A long procession of chars-à-bancs brought the sightless men to the Abbey, where they marched through the cloisters in single file, each man with his hand on the shoulder of the man in front of him—the leader being led by one more fortunate than himself in that he had at least his sight left to him. There were also many in various stages of convalescence from wounds, but nearly all were blind.

When they had taken their places Sir Frederick played several organ pieces, and accompanied his daughter, Mrs Stainer, who played the violin in an arrangement by her father for violin and organ of *The Flowers of the Forest*. Clara Butt, from the organ gallery, sang *God shall wipe away all tears*, and the Mendelssohn motet *Hear my Prayer* was sung by the Abbey choir.

Clara Butt sang, as her last song, *Abide with me*, and while doing so, unknown to anyone present, passed through one of the most awkward moments of her career.

As she took a deep breath a fly was drawn into her mouth, and down her throat. She very nearly choked; but struggled on with tears in her eyes, and, as her listeners afterwards said with unconscious truth, “tears in her voice,” managing to get through only with the greatest difficulty. For once, as she declaimed, “I fear no foe,” she *did* fear one most desperately—the wretched insect in her throat, the “enemy within.” It was little consolation to know that by now it had probably paid for its intrusion with its life.

The incident was infinitely worse than it would have been if it had happened on the platform, or before a seeing audience, to whom, by expression or gesture, she

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could have explained the situation. But she won through to the end, though never before was she so glad to finish a song. And though she learned afterwards that some hesitation and something unusual in her singing had been noticed, it was ascribed by her blissfully unconscious hearers, including the reporters, to emotion! Which, after all, it was.

The "Souvenir Luncheons" arranged by the Three Arts Club committee at the Savoy were another War effort with which Clara Butt was prominently associated. All the leading 'stars' of the theatrical and musical world came to these and took tables, at which they entertained parties of distinguished guests. Gifts, which had been sent in at her request for this purpose by the public, were auctioned after lunch in the ballroom, as were also the delightful programmes drawn for the functions by John Hassall. These luncheons were also in aid of the Three Arts Fund.

Throughout the War, Clara Butt remained one of the very few artists who managed to run concert tours, and in addition to those she organized for distressed artists she herself toured England repeatedly.

Constance Collier, who returned from America soon after the outbreak of the War, joined her on one provincial tour, and, in addition to the recitations which were her contributions to the programmes, she made an appeal at each concert for the Red Cross funds. On this tour they travelled by car, and used often to eat their meals in picnic fashion along the road, where the incongruity of their simple tastes with the dignity of their equipage caused some astonishment among the country

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folk. They would decide upon bread and cheese for lunch, stop at a baker's for rolls, and then the big car would pull up at a village grocery, from which the proprietor would emerge, all smiles and servility.

"Have you any nice cheese?" they would inquire.

"Certainly, ladies. What kind would you like?"

"M-m, well—could we taste it?" would be the next request. Whereupon samples were brought out, which they nibbled critically, and, after much laughing discussion, each would decide upon her own special choice.

"We will take some of each of these, please," they would say, indicating two varieties.

"Yes, ladies, how much may I cut for you? And what is your next pleasure?" burbled the smiling grocer, anticipating an order of several pounds at least.

"One ounce of each, please, and wrap them separately. That's all, thank you!" was the reply, and, having received the two parcels from the outraged shopkeeper, they would drive off to some secluded spot to enjoy their lunch.

They shared another plebeian preference which often disgusted those who served them at 'high-class' hotels. They arrived at Dundee one afternoon, on the day of their concert, and were attended by a waiter whose oppressive magnificence, which even included white gloves, somehow conveyed the impression that he had been specially 'got in' for their benefit. They damped his spirits from the first by ordering tea—no dinner—but he brightened up a little at the thought of the sumptuous meal that he must surely be asked to serve to two such distinguished artists, later in the evening.

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"And what shall I order for your supper, after the concert, *mesdames*?" he asked, bending over them deferentially, and smoothing the fingers of his gloves.

"Boiled onions, please, and a little bread and butter!" was the reply.

The splendid waiter faded away, and they never saw him again. The offending onions were served, not by him, but by a small and grimy kitchen-maid.

After the death of Sir Herbert Tree, Lady Tree joined Clara Butt on one of her War-time tours. She was always greatly concerned over the difficulty of getting proper food for her friend, and used to resort almost to bribery in her efforts.

"Are you going to hear Clara Butt?" she would say to a shopkeeper. "Yes? Well, you know you won't hear her at her best unless I can get some butter for her. It's so important for a singer. *Do* let me have just a little bit."

Or perhaps, in Devon, she would bargain thus: "Could you possibly let me have half a pound of cream? It's for Clara Butt, you know; I wonder if you would like two tickets for her concert?" And by hook or crook she usually succeeded in getting what she wanted.

In 1916 Clara Butt went on a tour under rather unusual conditions through the mining centres of Wales, taking with her Carrie Tubb, W. H. Squire and Mrs Squire, Gertrude Blower, Harold Craxton, and William Murdoch. They travelled and lived in a saloon carriage, the railways providing attendance, and thus they surmounted the difficulties of War-time travelling and accommodation.

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It was an interesting trip. They gave concerts in all the mining districts, in all sorts of halls in all manner of out-of-the-way places, and had crowded audiences everywhere, made up of the miners and their wives and families. In one place there was something very much resembling a riot in the struggle to obtain admittance.

The train used to be 'parked' at queer little railway-sidings, quite off the map, where the key of the station would be confided to Clara Butt's care, so that the party could have free access at all hours to their 'hotel.' The only inhabitants of these sidings were usually the stationmaster and his wife, from whom could be purchased new-laid eggs, butter, home-made bread, and other country delicacies beyond the reach of rationing regulations, and very agreeable luxuries to these town-dwellers, in war-time.

Their saloon was standing outside a country station one morning, and all the party except Clara Butt, Mrs Squire, and Gertrude Blower, who were busy writing, had gone off for a walk. Presently Gertrude, looking out of the window, saw that a crowd was collecting, talking agitatedly, and she called out to ask what was the matter. One of the men shouted back, "Kitchener's drowned," and she laughed, thinking it was some clumsy attempt at a joke. They soon learned that it was no joke, but a tragic reality, and that the man upon whom so much of England's fate rested in those gloomy days had gone to his death in the *Hampshire*.

For War charities Clara Butt organized other entertainments too numerous to mention, both in London

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and throughout the provinces, and also gave her services on countless occasions, in addition to her undiminished efforts for charitable work not connected with the War. She sang the National Anthem to open an 'all star' performance at Covent Garden in aid of the King's Actors' Pension Fund, at which the King and Queen were present. She sang it again at the bazaar in aid of St Dunstan's blinded soldiers, opened by Queen Alexandra at the Albert Hall; and again at the Patriotic Fair at Covent Garden in aid of the War funds. She sang it, in fact, at every big patriotic function at which the King and Queen were present. On one such occasion, at the Guildhall, the King came up to her afterwards, as she was waiting for her car, and said, "It is always lovely to hear you sing *God save the King*."

"Aren't you tired of hearing it, sir?" she asked. "I have sung it so often that if I die soon, I shall have 'She died of singing *God save the King*' put on my tombstone!"

The King laughed heartily. It was an aspect of the National Anthem not often presented for the consideration of Royalty.

She was singing one night at the Tower, Blackpool, and, on returning to her hotel, St Anne's Hydro, the manager asked if she would sing one song for the guests, as they wanted to contribute something to her Red Cross week. She did so, in the ballroom, into which the guests crowded, sitting packed together on the floor. There was an enthusiastic scene, and she was presented with £100, the result of a hasty collection for her fund.

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Clara Butt's work in the War made, as was inevitable, a very deep impression on the public mind, and as time went on demands for its recognition were heard on all sides. A writer in the Press, under the heading "Lady Butt," said :

Surely there will be titles for women when we have time to think of such things after the War. And surely Clara Butt will be offered one of the very first. She has given enormously to the War funds, as well as spending her powers with superb generosity on their behalf. Moreover, she permits herself no personal luxuries, and a new gown is an event.

The demands grew more and more insistent as time went on, and at last amounted almost to a Press campaign, so that it was impossible for the object of it to remain in ignorance of the public's generous feeling. She was most averse, however, to the idea of a title; and therefore, in conversation with one of the Queen's ladies-in-waiting, she asked that her wish that nothing of the sort be offered to her should be conveyed to her Majesty.

In spite of this, however, she read in an English paper, when in Paris some time later, that "the title of Dame of the British Empire had been graciously conferred upon her by his Majesty the King, in recognition of the important services rendered by her during the late War."

The honour was a most popular one, and congratulations poured in; and Dame Clara Butt learned a little later from persons in close touch with their Majesties, why her personal wishes in the matter had been disregarded. The general desire that she should be honoured had been expressed not only in the Press but



ELLEN TERRY, CLARA BUTT, AND KENNERLEY RUMFORD

On the terrace at the Rumfords' home at Hampstead.

Photo Central News

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in personal communications to the King. He had, indeed, been so inundated with such letters that he said at last he could not hold out any longer, or the public would think it was *his* fault!

Kennerley Rumford achieved distinction in several branches of War service. From the outbreak of war he served with the Red Cross at the Front, afterwards joining the Headquarters Staff, and last of all the Secret Service. He was twice mentioned in dispatches, and at the end of the War his name was gazetted as one of those to whom the King had permitted the retention of their military rank and title. He is therefore officially and not only by courtesy Captain Kennerley Rumford. He also did valuable service in organizing concerts for the troops at the Front.

Amid all her other activities during the War, Clara Butt found time to study Russian, and attained quite a fair proficiency. Anyone who has any idea of the appalling difficulties that the Slavonic languages present to a foreigner will realize that few singers can claim to have done as much for the sake of their art.

A plain Chinese jade 'slave-bangle,' which Clara Butt almost always wears, has a War story attached to it that is worth telling. It formerly belonged to Lily Hanbury (Mrs Herbert Guedalla), who impulsively drew it off her own arm, and placed it on that of Clara Butt "for luck," when the latter was leaving for her first trip to Australia in 1907. There was certainly no lack of luck on that tour; but Miss Hanbury died before her friend's return, and the bracelet has remained one of her most treasured possessions.

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When, during the War, the Duchess of Marlborough inaugurated her Jewel Fund, to which she asked that the ornaments given should be what the owners valued most, Clara Butt sent her treasured bangle, feeling that in doing so she was not only giving something for herself, but also for her friend, whose many admirers, she felt, would like her name to be associated with the fund. Knowing how much she valued the bracelet, Kennerley Rumford, without her knowledge, sent his agent to Christie's, where the jewels were auctioned, to buy it back for her. Unknown to Mr Rumford, Mr Guedalla had the same generous idea. Kennerley Rumford, having no idea how the prices would soar, gave the agent instructions to go to £100; he went on to £110, and then had to let the other bidder have his own way. Others took up the running, and the bangle eventually fell to Mr Guedalla for £250. She received it from him next morning, with a little note: "Here it is, Clara dear, come back to you!"

CHAPTER XIV

Abide with me—A Song with a History—*The Lost Chord*—*Sea Pictures*—*The Dream of Gerontius*—*Land of Hope and Glory*—*My Treasure*—*Have you News of my Boy Jack?*—*The Keys of Heaven*—Some other Successes—Mystery of a Sullivan Manuscript

PROBABLY no singer ever had so many songs “specially dedicated” to her as has Clara Butt. And certainly no song—with the single exception of *Home, Sweet Home* and *Adelina Patti*—has ever been quite so closely identified with a singer in the public mind as *Abide with me* has been with the great English contralto. The percentage of concerts at which she has sung it is simply astounding; and even now, after more than thirty years, it is still first on the list of public favourites.

The composer, Samuel Liddle, was a fellow-student at the Royal College of Music with Clara Butt. He studied composition as well as the piano, and was known to her as a clever and promising musician. When she left the College she lost sight of him for some years, and then happened to hear that he was earning a precarious living as a hack pianist. She sought him out, and asked him if he would care to come and play for her regularly when she was preparing her work for her engagements, an offer which was eagerly accepted. His enthusiasm for her voice was very great, and he naturally found inspiration in so constantly playing for her. He looked

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up at her from the piano one day, and said, "You know, Miss Butt, your voice gets right into my fingers!"

"Well, if that's so," she said, good-naturedly, "why don't you write a song for me and prove it? I shan't believe a word you say about it until you do!"

He went home, her voice ringing in his ears, and with it the unborn spirit of the song that was to be. Of all created voices that of Clara Butt best expresses religious fervour, and his mind turned naturally to Lyte's verses and their dramatic possibilities. Next morning—at 10.30, to be precise—he started to write; and at three o'clock *Abide with me*, as all the world now knows it, was on paper.

He took it to Clara Butt next day when he went to practise with her, and she knew it at once as 'her own' song. She first sang it at her concert at Plymouth before leaving for her year's study abroad; and after the last solemn phrase, "In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me," had died away the audience remained for a moment or two perfectly silent, recognizing in the song, as it was sung by that matchless voice, a grandeur too deep even for applause. The composer thought at first that his song was an utter and awful failure; but when the tribute of silence had been paid and the applause broke out there was no doubt that the public had acclaimed the song as well as the singer.

Abide with me soon attained a tremendous popularity, and it was not long before the sound of the opening chords when the song was given unannounced, as an encore, was certain to call forth a spontaneous burst of applause from every audience. Its sales have been

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enormous, and it is a classic which no self-respecting music-shop the world over would be likely to allow to run out of stock.

Of course it pays the penalty of its popularity by being ruthlessly mangled at the hands and voice of every warbling amateur. But one would have thought that some natural diffidence might have deterred an aspiring Sydney contralto, who 'rendered' it at a reception in honour of Clara Butt! And there is cause for gratitude to Providence that one was not called upon to live next door to another who wrote to her, "I have never missed singing *Abide with me* one single day since I heard you sing it!"

The stories concerning the song are legion. During the War, Clara Butt received a letter from the mother of a young officer at the Front who possessed a gramophone and had *Abide with me* among his records. A friend beside him in the trench had put on the record during a 'scrap,' and the first deep notes had sounded, when he was killed outright by a shell-burst, which also stunned and wounded the owner of the gramophone. He recovered consciousness after a few minutes, and, writing an account of the occurrence to his mother, said: "When I came to, good old Clara was still singing!" His mother wrote, "I must apologize for my boy's irreverent way of referring to you, but I wanted you to know how your singing is loved at the Front."

So much was the record in demand in the dressing-stations at the Front, that Kennerley Rumford had often to listen to his wife's voice as he went about his work with dead and dying men all round him. The sound

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of the familiar voice in those surroundings so unnerved him that it became an understood thing that the record should not be put on in his presence, unless by a dying request so urgent that it could not be refused.

A nurse once wrote to Clara Butt from a 'T.B.' sanatorium, saying that she had heard her sing *Abide with me* some years previously, and it had so affected her that she felt she must try to serve her fellow-creatures. She had become a nurse, had caught the infection, and was now a consumptive. The singer went to see her, and heard from her some more stories of the song. There was a ward in the institution in which patients in the last stages were placed, and they always asked for *Abide with me* when the end was near. One little girl, who knew that she had not long to live, had made her a tragi-comic request. "Don't forget," she said to the nurse (who happened to possess very beautiful hair), "you've promised me two things before I go—to let me see you with your hair down, and to let me hear *Abide with me* when I'm dying."

Special requests for the song to be sung must long ago have run into many thousands. Scarcely a concert ever goes by without them. In Australia especially, though she might try her hardest to conclude a programme without singing it, she rarely, if ever, succeeded.

She has sometimes feared whether in time such oft repetition might not affect her feeling for the song, and for that reason has tried to omit it. But it has never done so; and *Abide with me* means as much to her now as on the first day she sang it.

Among a dozen requests to sing it, received one

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day, she was rather startled to open one beginning, "Dear Madame Butt, for God's sake don't sing *Abide with me!*" But it was not so unkind as it looked. The writer went on to explain that he couldn't bear it, because his wife, since dead, had been with him when he last heard her sing it.

Of the thousands of occasions upon which she has sung it, none has been in so perfect a setting as a tiny church, surrounded with the "excellent loneliness" of the great hills of Wales. Driving there one day with some friends, she caught a glimpse of the little sanctuary, and followed an impulsive desire to enter it. It was Sunday, and the old sexton was setting all in order after service. She sat down at the little organ, softly played some hymns, and then at last began to sing *Abide with me*. The old sexton joined in at first, then stopped in wonder as the great voice filled the little building, and seemed to go echoing away among the hills. When she had finished he said reverently, pointing upwards, "Ah, ma'am, they must have heard that up yonder!"

After *Abide with me* the song that is most closely associated with Clara Butt is, probably, Sullivan's *Lost Chord*. It was not written for her, but for Mrs Ronalds, a famous Society leader in the nineties. She was an American, very beautiful, very wealthy, and an ardent amateur of music, an engagement at whose house set a *cachet* upon any musician who secured it. She sang *The Lost Chord* into the phonograph—hers was one of the earliest records ever made—and played a joke with it on her guests at a party at which the

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Prince of Wales, Sir Arthur Sullivan, and many other notabilities were present.

The phonograph was hidden under a table, and started unawares. When the assembled guests heard the well-known voice of their hostess singing *The Lost Chord* while she was standing in the flesh among them, and obviously not singing at all, the 'sensation' she created was tremendous. It was a memorable occasion, too, more so than anyone realized; for it was the true beginning of the gramophone as we now know it.

Sir Arthur asked Clara Butt to sing the song soon after he first met her; and when he heard her do so he said, "That is how I always meant it to be sung." It was Queen Alexandra's favourite song, and has an undying charm for the public; and Clara Butt herself gives it pride of place among her favourites. The manuscript was bequeathed by the composer to Mrs Ronalds, and by her to Clara Butt. In a beautiful binding, it now remains among the singer's most treasured possessions.

The history of Elgar's *Sea Pictures* is interesting. When Clara Butt was living at Hyde Park Mansions, after her return from Paris, her companion, Madame Snella, went to the door one day in answer to a knock, and came in to report that some one had called with some songs, and wanted to show them to her mistress. But it happened that Clara was splashing contentedly in her bath at the time, and said she wasn't coming out to see anyone! Madame Snella came back, evidently impressed, after delivering this message to say, "Oh, 'Baby' dear, *do* see him! He's such a nice man, and he says he's got a whole *cycle* of songs to show you!"

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But Clara wasn't abandoning a perfectly good hot bath for all the nice men in London and she shouted back, "I don't care if it's a *bicycle*! If he wants to see me he must call another day!"

The "nice man," who was Edward Elgar, then quite unknown, came back the next day, and was admitted. As soon as he had played his songs Clara realized at once that she had found something after her own heart. She produced the cycle at the Norwich Festival, where it had an immediate success.

She once played a neat little trick on the composer at a Philharmonic concert. She had sung the *Sea Pictures* with the orchestra, and at the end had been called repeatedly to the platform with the composer. But she was determined that he should have the ovation he deserved all to himself, so, coming on together after many recalls, they bowed once more side by side, and then, with a little gesture that took the audience into her confidence, she slipped away. Elgar bowed again and again, fancying that the singer was still beside him sharing the applause. Then, turning to lead her from the stage, he discovered, evidently to his great embarrassment, that he was alone!

When, after his fame was well established, he wrote *The Dream of Gerontius*, he intended the part of the Angel for Clara Butt, and it was composed entirely with her voice in mind. But though the work was to be so closely associated with her in later years, she did not introduce it to the public. It was to be produced at the Birmingham Festival, at which Clara Butt was engaged to sing; and, knowing that the part had been

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written for her, she assumed that she was to sing it. So what was her surprise, on meeting Marie Brema at tea after a Crystal Palace concert one day, to hear her say, "You're singing at Birmingham, aren't you? So am I. I'm doing Elgar's new work, *Gerontius*. What are you going to sing?"

The explanation was that commercial considerations had prevailed. Clara Butt would 'draw' whatever she sang; and so also, by that time, would a new work by Elgar. So perhaps the Festival committee were scarcely to be blamed for arranging their programme in the most profitable manner.

Land of Hope and Glory, whose ever-popular refrain was taken from one of the marches in the same composer's *Pomp and Circumstance*, was written actually at Clara Butt's suggestion. *Pomp and Circumstance* was being given at a Queen's Hall concert at which Clara Butt was singing the *Sea Pictures*. She was standing talking to the composer just after the performance, and said, referring to the march, "*What a tune! Why don't you write a song for me, and use that as a refrain?*"

Land of Hope and Glory (of which Dr A. C. Benson wrote the words) was the result.

My Treasure, the 'baby-song' that Clara Butt made famous, was not written for her, as is popularly supposed. She found it among the songs that are constantly being submitted to her, and brought it out while her own babies were in the nursery. It caught on at once, the genuine charm of the little song being enhanced by the warmth of public interest in the singer's personal life. Like *Abide with me*, it has had, and still has, an



"MADAM, WILL YOU WALK?"

Photo Central News



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immense popularity among amateurs, and is a 'best seller' in most English-speaking quarters of the globe.

Quite recently, at a provincial concert, Clara Butt received a note from Joan Trevalsa, saying, "Would you mind singing *My Treasure*? I am here with my little girl." Fortunately the singer had a copy with her, and could comply with the composer's request.

A song which had a strong appeal during the War years was Edward German's fine setting of Kipling's *Have you News of my Boy Jack*? Some time before this song was written, Clara Butt wrote to Rudyard Kipling, pointing out that England lacked a stirring national song about the sea. He was *par excellence* the man to write one; would he do so for her? Kipling replied that he could not at the moment, as he was not writing anything of that kind; but some months later *My Boy Jack* appeared in a daily journal, and she saw in it the very song she had been seeking. She sent the poem to Elgar, but there were personal reasons why he preferred not to set it; so she invited Edward German to Compton Lodge, and there, sitting by the fire in the library, she read the lines aloud to him, giving him her reading of the poem. He instantly grasped her idea, and brought her in a day or two a setting which perfectly expressed it. This she sang constantly during the War, and for some years afterwards.

A whole chapter might be written around *The Keys of Heaven*. If the letters that have reached the singers are to be believed (and why should they not?), it is responsible for innumerable engagements and love-matches, and for the healing of many a lovers' quarrel.

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The married happiness of Clara Butt and her husband, as the public is permitted to catch a glimpse of it in that little song, has been the means of bringing many happy couples together.

But even so apparently inoffensive a song as this does not please everybody. One letter of which it formed the theme told a very different story ; objection was taken in all seriousness to Clara Butt's acceptance of the "keys" of her lover's heart after her unqualified rejection of "the keys of Heaven"—a preference which the writer evidently regarded as a grave affront to Paradise !

Although *The Silver Ring* was not written for Clara Butt, it was little known until she took it up. Madame Chaminade brought it to her one day and asked her to sing it, and was charmed immediately by her entirely new reading of it. Hitherto it had been sung much more slowly and, as *L'Anneau d'argent*, in French. Madame Chaminade was playing in Bradford when Clara Butt first brought the song out, and the success of her rendering of the new English version was immediate and lasting.

Among other songs whose popularity she has made, and which have been among her great successes, are A. A. Needham's *Husheen* and Frances Allitsen's *Song of Thanksgiving*. Both were written specially for her.

Sir Arthur Sullivan was at work upon an opera called *St Cecilia*, which he was writing specially for Clara Butt, not long before his death. So far as is known it was never completed, and though a careful search was made for it, the manuscript was never found, and the most complete mystery surrounds its fate.

CHAPTER XV

The Gramophone and Immortality—The First Clara Butt Records
—Community-singing—Recording in Church and at Home—
'Wireless' and its Influence—The Perfect Audience—Marconi

UNTIL Edison bethought him of the phonograph science seems to have left the realm of art severely alone. But the invention of the gramophone and, later, the use of 'wireless' have altered all that, and have done a service to art and artists that can never be estimated in our time.

The gramophone has conferred upon executive musicians the priceless gift of immortality—the boon that hitherto only the creative artist might hope to win—and R.L.S.'s happy verse,

Still they are carolled and said—
On wings they are carried—
After the singer is dead
And the maker buried,

is no longer only true of the poet and composer, but also of the players and singers who have delighted their generation. Caruso's voice is not lost to the world as are the great voices of an earlier day. It lives on for ever, ringing, not only like theirs, in the ears of memory, but ready and waiting to be called up out of the great silence whenever we will—a most pleasant and melodious ghost. Thus science, remorseless, cold, a thing of rule and measure, has provided for us a spiritual reality ; so

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that though man, being flesh and blood, must go the way of all flesh, his art, which is of the spirit, may yet live after him.

It was many years before Clara Butt would consent to make records. She was approached repeatedly to do so; but it was not until 1909, when recording had reached a very satisfactory pitch of perfection, that she agreed. In October of that year a very interesting function took place at the Savoy Hotel, at the invitation of the directors of the Gramophone Company, to celebrate the event. Clara Butt and Kennerley Rumford sang several of their favourite songs, the actual performance of each being followed by a hearing of its record. Madame Butt sang *The Lost Chord*, *Land of Hope and Glory*, and *Il Segreto*; and Mr Rumford, *The Devout Lover*, *King Charles*, and *Thou'rt passing hence, my Brother*. Together they sang the duets *Snowdrops* and *Night Hymn at Sea*.

It was an occasion of unique interest to the audience, who listened critically as each song in turn was sung and reproduced. The verdict upon the records was favourable, Clara Butt giving her formal endorsement of that verdict in a letter to the makers, in which she said, "My records are in very truth the living voice of Clara Butt."

From that time forward the demand for both singers' records has been as steady as the demand for seats at their concerts, and they are scattered far and wide among the music-lovers of the world. Their appeal is so universal that even in this degenerate age, when music has to fight for its existence against an almost impenetrable barrage of jazz, they have somehow managed to

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make a place for themselves in parts of the world where the singers' living voices have never been heard. In Java, where English singers are rare; in planters' bungalows in the Malay Peninsula; in Fiji and China and Borneo; and even in Japan, where popular taste is divided between the weird wailings and twangings of songs to the *samosen* and the most blatant of 'rag' inanities; in the Rhodesian highlands and the Australian bush—sooner or later, in the most unlikely places, your host will produce with pride a 'Clara Butt' record.

A record of historic interest is one of the National Anthem which she sang at the Coronation of King George and Queen Mary in 1911, accompanied by the band of the Coldstream Guards. She was specially selected to do this because "the work of this great contralto has been so much bound up in representative English music that we have come to look upon her as the truly national singer."

At the request of the singer this record was issued at half the usual price, in order, as she said, "to bring it within the scope of a greater number of the King's loyal subjects."

The community-singing of the Handel Festival Choir and Crystal Palace audience, led by Clara Butt, was recorded for the gramophone, but unfortunately all the choruses proved to be too long for a full-sized record, and could not be produced. Records of the Empire Day community-singing which she led in 1927 were, however, a complete success.

Recently Clara Butt has been making records under entirely new conditions—in a City church with the organ,

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instead of, as formerly, in the studio, where there were great difficulties in the way of registering the proper balance of such a voice as hers. A cable was specially laid to the church from the studio, and immediately after each song the record was transmitted back to her, so that she could judge on the spot whether the recording had been satisfactory.

More recently still a further innovation was successfully tried. The Columbia Gramophone Company transferred a complete recording apparatus to the Rumfords' house, Compton Lodge, and set up a studio in a spare bedroom, whence a cable was connected with a microphone in the music-room. Clara Butt and Kennerley Rumford sang a number of songs, the records were made, and one of each was played over in the presence of a gathering of friends and Press representatives. This was the first time that records had been made in an artist's own drawing-room.

As the gramophone had conferred immortality upon the musical executant, and an immeasurably wider field, so 'wireless' multiplied his opportunities of a hearing, and secured for him an audience whose numbers he could never have imagined in his wildest dreams.

Clara Butt holds the strongest views upon this new marvel of science. When the question of broadcasting her own voice was mooted, she met with much opposition from her agents, on the ground that it was *infra dig.* for an artist of her standing, and for crudely commercial reasons. But Clara Butt did not look at the matter in that light at all. The wonder of the thing caught her imagination, as it must that of all imaginative people—

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the capturing out of the invisible blue of all those elusive sounds that have always been there to be captured ; sounds that, as she says, " Adam and Eve might have listened to in the Garden of Eden, if they'd only known how."

And now that the discovery *has* been made, why attempt to frustrate its possibilities? It is an irresistible force, and a beneficent one, which is daily enlarging the sphere of thought and education, and bringing pleasure, interest, and even spiritual comfort to uncounted millions. To a mind like Clara Butt's the idea that possible commercial considerations should be allowed to weigh against all this was unthinkable. The fear that—to put it baldly—if every one could hear her for nothing they would not pay to go to her concerts, had no influence when opposed to her desire to sing to an otherwise inaccessible audience. There they were, in isolated farms, in poor homes, in gloomy towns and dull villages, in hospital wards and sickrooms—thousands, millions even, of potential listeners, whom she could never hope to reach in a hundred concert tours.

As readers of this book may have noticed, Clara Butt usually succeeds in getting her own way! And the argument ended with her decision to accept an offer to open the new high-power broadcasting station at Chelmsford in 1924. She followed that up by broadcasting two of the items from her programme at the Albert Hall concert she gave as a farewell before leaving on her last trip to Australia. A serious illness and operation had forced her to abandon her provincial tour, and she took this way of saying *au revoir* to her friends in the

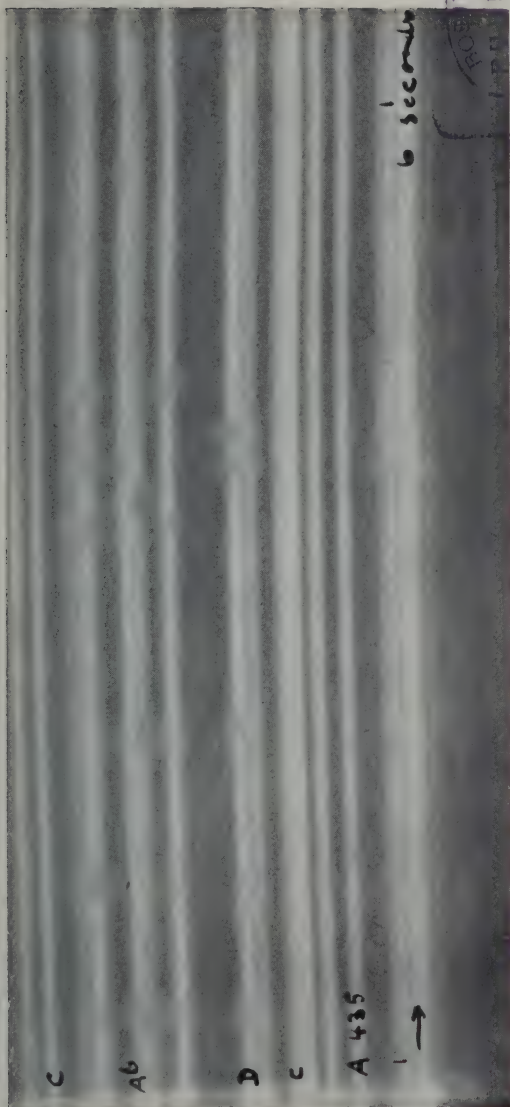
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provinces, and of giving them an opportunity of hearing her which she could not have given them otherwise. She had, moreover, strong motives of personal sentiment in doing this. Her mother was ill, and could not come to London to hear her ; and Mrs Rumford senior was also in so precarious a state of health that there was little hope that she could live until her son and daughter-in-law returned from Australia. Kennerley Rumford therefore joined his wife in broadcasting several songs. Clara Butt never sang to her mother again ; she died while her daughter was in Sydney. Mrs Rumford died soon after the singers' return to England.

Clara Butt warmly supports broadcasting, too, from the point of view of her profession. As her work in the War proved, her own success never dulled her sympathy for less fortunate musicians. She well knows that in the musical world many are called, but few—pitifully few—are chosen. And her recognition of the enlarged field that 'wireless' offers to young artists influenced her greatly in her decision to give the most emphatic endorsement possible to the new world-force, by herself broadcasting.

In carrying out her project she had one of the most memorable experiences of her career. Possessing, as she does, a keen imagination, she saw herself not merely singing into a cold, unresponsive microphone, but in an auditorium a million miles square, to the sick and crippled and bedridden, to rich and poor, gentle and simple—a vast, unseen multitude. She had found at last the perfect audience, unmeasured in size and impeccable in conduct, where none coughed or fidgeted

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A PHOTOGRAPH (RADIO-TONOGRAM) OF CLARA BUTT'S SPEAKING VOICE

Taken by E. E. Fournier d'Albe at the B.B.C. studio.

"I get so many lovely letters from people in every part of the country." Prevalent notes: D, G, B flat, and A flat.

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or whispered, but listened "with all its ears," drinking in every note in appreciative silence!

There and then Clara Butt became a 'wireless' enthusiast, and consumed with a great and novel aspiration. She had sung to Europe. Now she desired to sing to the whole world. "Some day one voice will do it," she said. "I want above all things that that voice shall be mine. I pray that when that day comes I may not be too old to sing a song that shall be heard in the back-blocks of Australia and New Zealand, on the Pacific slopes of America, in India, and the islands of the Southern Seas. The triumphs of man's mind are unlimited. We have tapped a wonderful source of pleasure and profit, it is true, but surely it is one of world-peace and unity as well. I would like my voice to do something to bring to pass the glorious day 'when war shall be no more.'"

From the musical standpoint, too, Clara Butt has much to say about the influence of broadcasting. It is her opinion that it is having a remarkable effect upon musical taste. Time was when the amateur 'musical evening' was an accepted form of social entertainment from which there was little hope of escape. Now, thank heaven, it is almost extinct. This is because what the gramophone began, broadcasting is completing. In nearly every home nowadays good music can be heard nightly for next to nothing; and the demand that created the supply of feeble amateur renderings of *Sing me to sleep* and *Frühlingsrauschen* has happily ceased.

That a section of the people possesses musical appreciation we owe to the 'Pops,' the National Sunday League, and other such organizations, and we owe it

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to broadcasting that an immensely greater public which can appreciate good music (despite the reign of jazz) is fast coming into being. 'Wireless' is building up a vast body of intelligent listeners—the necessary third partner in the musical trilogy, which is made up of the composer's creation, the artist's interpretation, and the listener's appreciation.

At least part of Clara Butt's dream came true when she led a community choir of ten thousand in Hyde Park, on Empire Day. The singing was broadcast, and though it may not have been heard throughout the Empire, it penetrated far afield; and the spirit of the song, through the Empire's newspapers, reached every corner of the earth where English is spoken, and our country is beloved.

Clara Butt has a more than ordinary personal interest in 'wireless,' for Mezzana, the Italian village of which her friend and teacher, Etelka Gerster, Countess Gardini, was the "Lady Bountiful," and whose *château* Clara often visited in her younger days, was the home of Marconi. He was a lad of seventeen, to all appearance quite an ordinary one, when Clara Butt first met him. He came frequently with his elder brother to the *château*, and she also went often to the little house near the station, where, in the back garden, the boy inventor spent long hours, apparently in idle dreaming. In reality he was dreaming such dreams, as it proved, as should revolutionize the whole world.

His invention was pooh-poohed at first by the scientists, but the King of Italy had a clearer vision, and while Clara was at Mezzana young Marconi

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received an invitation to stay at the palace, whither the King invited the leading scientists of Europe and America to meet him.

They came, heard what the young dreamer had to say, and saw his demonstration. As a result he, like Clara Butt, found himself famous in an hour. Most amazing of all, perhaps, was the simplicity of his apparatus; and when the sceptics, convinced at last, visited his home, curious to learn what means he had used to arrive at his stupendous discovery, they found almost nothing but a few marks and measurements on the wall. He had dreamed his invention, and had perfected one of the most marvellous achievements of science, practically without mechanical aid.

CHAPTER XVI

Criticism, Skilled and Otherwise—The ‘Highbrows’—What is Popularity?

IT was once said of Clara Butt that “the critics had never forgiven her for having a voice.” The phrase expresses with fair aptness the outlook of a type of person, fortunately rare, who seems unable to regard any superlative achievement on the part of others without a certain bitterness which finds expression in adverse criticism. It is the spleen of the less successful, which seeks to poison, if it cannot injure, the greater success of others.

Criticism, when it is skilled and fair, is not resented by any great artist; but, unfortunately for art, all public performers are exposed to the fire of the ignorant as well as of the learned. Real criticism is a difficult and highly technical branch of any art with which it deals; but of all arts it is perhaps the most exposed to spurious imitation. Anyone can juggle with words; and it is easy to ‘put over’ an affectation of knowledge of a thing so intangible as art, whereas the impostor who sought to grope among the technicalities of an exact science could never hope to escape detection.

There will always be a few of these, and probably they do not matter much. “Curs bark when great men ride away on horseback.” One cannot help almost admiring the optimism of the writer who sought to

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quench the verdict of the crowded thousands in the Crystal Palace at the Handel Festival, by saying, as he grudgingly reported Clara Butt's success, "the audience had the bad taste to prefer the singing of the youngest of the artists." He was evidently a born champion of lost causes. It was rather like trying to extinguish a burning house with a teaspoon.

In the Dominions, where the arts are in their infancy, intelligent criticism of them, especially of music, is as yet a rarity; and, with a very few exceptions, what passes for it in the Press is in the hands either of reporters who take police-court proceedings, street accidents, political speeches, first nights, and concerts in their stride, or of locally trained music-teachers, whom unsuspecting editors believe to be experts competent to sit in judgment upon the world's greatest artists. The only critic who is expected to be a highly trained expert is the sporting reporter, and accounts of race-meetings and prize-fights may be relied upon to be technically correct in every detail!

There is another form of criticism, which is prevalent among students, and, occasionally, among singers of high standing. Even Plunket Greene, fine singer that he was, could not resist indulging in this sometimes, and he was once severely taken to task for it by Clara Butt. A friend overheard a conversation in the artists' room, while waiting for her at rehearsal one day. "*What* a voice!" said some one. "Ah, yes! She has the *voice*," answered Plunket Greene, "but she won't *work*!" The remark was reported to Clara, and next day she took the bull by the horns. "Come into the

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artists' room, Mr Greene," she said, "I want to speak to you." He followed her; and she added, "Look here! You said this yesterday"—quoting his remark. "Now listen. *No* one works harder than I do. I have studied my very hardest both here and abroad, and no one has ever tried harder to make the best of their advantages. So, please, whatever else you may say about me, don't say *that* sort of thing again."

She was sometimes accused by her fellow-students in her early days, especially in Paris, of not taking her work in earnest, because she refused to take part in the would-be-superior talk that went on all round her. As to whether they were right, surely the answer is in her position to-day. While as for those who so accused her . . . where are they now?

There have been those, too, who have sneered at Clara Butt and Kennerley Rumford as mere seekers after popularity. And it is a relief to turn from contemplation of the disgruntled minority to a sound summing up of what that popularity really is, in the *Daily Telegraph* review of their 'popular' concert at the Crystal Palace in June 1927.

The programme was designed on popular lines, but tawdry or sentimental music had no place in it. The popularity was of the robust kind, of which the manly Handel is the most eminent exponent in music. And surely no composer ever set more exquisite lines than those of Semele's *Where'er you walk*, which Mr Rumford sang with becoming dignity, and a perfect sense of measure. This is the popularity which does not debase art to win suffrages, but raises the people to the level where we all join in the same thoughts and the same aspirations.

CHAPTER XVII

A Flair for Dress

WITH all the fairies who came in generous mood to Clara Butt's christening, there was one with a very rare and useful gift tucked under his wing. It was the same gift with which Worth, Paquin, and all the great artists of the world of modes had been dowered—that curious, indefinable quality, a *flair* for dress.

Clara Butt has this characteristic in a very marked degree. She is one of those fortunate folk who can unearth a forgotten ten-year-old gown, twitch it here, rip it there, turn it sideways or upside-down, and produce a confection that is entirely beautiful and up-to-date. She has designed, or had a hand in designing, most of the striking creations for which she is famous; and although she has conformed to Dame Fashion in so far as that the 'lines' of her gowns never appear *démodée*, she has been far too wise to follow custom blindly when it was obvious that it would be more becoming and effective to ignore it.

She alone among singers seems to have grasped the fundamental fact that fitness counts for more than fashion. And whereas we are well accustomed, nowadays, to the appearance of singers of all shapes and sizes upon the platform in the brief and skimpy skirts that dressmakers decree, it is quite impossible to imagine the familiar figure of Clara Butt moving to her place

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behind the footlights without the graceful draperies that she wears so adroitly.

Yet she is no crank, flouting, or disapproving of, modern modes. Far from it. Off the platform, in private life, she wears skirts as short, in reason, as any smart woman of her acquaintance. But on the stage she is a law unto herself; and few will deny that her ruling is one that delights the eye as her music delights the ear.

From her earliest days on the platform, even before she was in a position to spend large sums on dress, she had this sense of effectiveness. An early Press notice remarks :

Miss Butt was looking brilliantly well in a simple white frock girded round with satin ribbons. A knot of damask roses in the corsage, and a cluster of small buds to correspond, tucked into her dark hair just behind her right ear, supplied the only note of colour about her dress ; and she was sparkling so brightly with youth and pleasure, and gaiety of heart, that she did not need even that.

Later descriptions go to show how great an impression was always created by the picture she made on the platform.

She looked wonderfully well in a robe of old-rose, veiled with gauze, and embroidered with huge, glittering swallows, and ears and leaves of wheat ; the bodice was swathed in chiffon, in which diamond dewdrops twinkled—a dress that would have looked ‘showy’ on an artist of less commanding presence, but which on her was entirely regal.

She wore a superb princess gown of clinging sequins, with a long train. The sequins were of all tones and tints—now blue,



"THE GRACEFUL DRAPERIES THAT SHE WEARS SO ADROITLY"



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now purple, now rose, now green—and the sleeves left the shoulders bare, and were tied below. One great pink rose was fastened at the side ; and her ornaments were a necklace and ropes of pearls reaching almost to her feet.

In a sheath-like gown of steel-grey, with arms and shoulders bare, and the only touch of colour given by a huge mass of scarlet flowers against one side of the bodice, she somewhat resembled Sarah Bernhardt as Cleopatra, and by her appearance and manner had won her audience before she sang a single note.

She wore a wonderful close-fitting gown, of glittering, serpent-like green, which made her appear even taller and more slender than she is.

Few singers, probably, have had the experience of being asked, not only for special songs, but for special dresses. This has quite often happened to Clara Butt, especially in the Dominions, where the dresses she had worn on one tour would be remembered, and ‘ requested ’ when she returned on the next. She was asked to wear her “ grape dress ”—a wonderful garment embroidered from head to heel with huge bunches of grapes, which she took with her on her first visit to Australia—almost as often as she was asked to sing *Abide with me*. It was made by Madame Wyatt, of Clifford Street, who made her wedding-gown and bridesmaids’ dresses. That wedding-gown, of very heavy *crêpe-de-Chine* trimmed with a deep silk fringe, was remodelled twenty-five years later by Lady Duff-Gordon (“ Lucille ”) and worn again at her silver-wedding concert. It is an interesting example of how mere redraping can bring a long-out-of-date garment back into fashion. In this

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case the skirt portion was simply taken out of the waist, and draped from the shoulder !

Some of Clara Butt's gowns almost 'grew upon her,' draped by Madame Paquin. One of her creations thus evolved—a lovely thing in blue and silver—had not a single seam. Paquin's made many of her platform dresses, always guaranteeing that her models should remain unique, and they failed her only once. A huge party was given in her honour in New York, by the composer of *O promise me*, during her first world-tour. John MacCormack was to sing, the cream of New York Society was to be there, and Clara Butt desired to look her very best. She went through all her trunks, full of gorgeous gowns, and decided, after much cogitation, upon a magnificent toilette of black and gold. She was mounting the stairs after leaving her wrap in the cloak-room when she saw, a few steps ahead of her, an exact facsimile of her own gown !

Madame Handley Seymour is another dress-artist who made her some beautiful and original gowns ; and Reville Terry were responsible for a clever blending of the red, white, and blue of the British flag, in the costume she wore when she led the community-singing on Empire Day in Hyde Park. The sweeping folds of her blue velvet draperies were caught up with a huge scarlet rose, from which there floated a wisp of scarlet *tulle* ; her hat, also blue velvet, was encircled with a crown of blue jewels ; and thrown over the arm of the chair beside her was a great white ermine cloak.

A frock that has been worn two hundred times, and each of those times on the occasion of a brilliant public



THE 'GRAPE DRESS'



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appearance, has surely earned its owner's gratitude and affection; and Clara Butt would be the last woman to deprive so honoured a garment of its just due. The frock—a geranium-red velvet, caught at the knee with a big black velvet rose—was a special favourite. She had worn it throughout her last Canadian and Australasian tour, a hundred and ninety-nine times, and never twice in the same town, and she celebrated its two-hundredth night on her return to England, by giving a farewell party in its honour. And there the faithful frock made one last triumphant appearance, before being consigned to the Nirvana that awaits even the best-beloved darlings of our wardrobes.

CHAPTER XVIII

A Legacy ?—Clara Butt's 'Bump' of Humour—An Elaborate Hoax—Charitable Schemes—A Ticket for a Child—Child-love, and Love for Animals—Some Personal Traits—'Defective' Tonsils and Surgical Adventures—Some Narrow Escapes from Drowning

WHETHER or not it is a trait bequeathed to her by her great-great-grandfather Theodore, Clara Butt certainly possesses a very well developed bump of humour, and a decided *flair* for practical joking.

In her College days she organized a hoax almost worthy of her ancestor, and played it off, aided and abetted by two other College girls, on a certain ardent admirer.

An elaborate correspondence was addressed to him, letters and telegrams, signed with a pen-name, and cleverly designed to intrigue his interest, inviting him to keep mysterious appointments which always held hope of clearing up the problem. The meetings were all avoided, but such plausible explanations followed that the poor wretch was convinced of their genuineness, and with undiminished optimism met trains and kept appointments in pursuit of the mythical writer. Best of all, he confided the mystery of the letters to the delighted girls, who warmly sympathized with him, especially when he told them that at last he thought he had "run the fellow to earth" in the person of an old school friend!



CLARA BUTT IN HER WEDDING-GOWN REMODELLED

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This joke was kept up for over a year, until, on a country holiday, his persecutors decided to bring it to an end. They invited him down to spend a day at their retreat, and then, equipped with an orchestra of toy drums, trumpets, and whistles, betook them to the top of a haystack that he would pass on his way up from the station.

On a placard at the base, in huge letters, was this legend: "For information regarding the unknown—look above you!" And as he hove in sight, and looked, the orchestra broke out into a symphony worthy of the very best jazz bands!

"A little nonsense now and then is relished by the wisest men," and Clara Butt is no exception to the rule. The 'years of discretion,' happily, have not quite cured her, and she is not unlikely to play a harmless prank on her friends at any moment.

At a dinner-party at her own house one night a whole pile of plates was dropped with a crash by the butler as he brought them in, greatly to the consternation of all present, including the host. Another supply of plates was brought, and reached the sideboard this time in safety, only to be dropped awkwardly, one by one, as the man handed them round. Mr Rumford, alarmed, apologized to the guests, saying concernedly that he feared the fellow had gone mad. Nervous guests sympathized with their supposedly chagrined hostess, who burst out laughing, and admitted it was only a little joke she had arranged for their entertainment!

The deep tone of her speaking voice often provides irresistible opportunities. In a foreign hotel a lady,

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presumably of somewhat doubtful virtue, rang up her room by mistake; and on hearing Clara Butt's voice on the 'phone in reply, evidently thought she had found a promising new victim for her charms. She sought to arrange a meeting, and Clara kept up the joke for some time; then dashed the temptress's hopes to the ground with the cruel decision, in her deepest bass, "I'm sorry, but I'm afraid, madame, that I should be of no use to you!" and rang off.

Another time, when doing a cure at a well-known English watering-place, a scandalized dame in the adjoining bathroom, on hearing Clara Butt's voice speaking to the attendant, screamed out in horror, "Nurse! Nurse! There's a *man* in there!" And then, on being told that it was no horrible man, but one Clara Butt, whose voice had so outraged her modesty, the good soul was overcome with remorse, and gushed, "Oh, dear! I'm *so* sorry! *How* could I think such a thing? I've adored her voice for years!"

It has not infrequently happened that when she has telephoned to a hairdresser's, asking them to send a lady to wave her hair, they have replied severely, "Very sorry, sir, but we don't send ladies to gentlemen's rooms!"

The funny side of things always appeals to Clara Butt, and an earnest young reporter, who asked for her "impressions" of the concert platform from the woman's point of view, was rewarded with rather more—and less—than he expected.

"Impressions? I can tell you what is the most *amusing* side of a woman's platform experience, if you

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like," she said. "It is the proposals of marriage she receives from people she has never set eyes on! For instance, an explorer once wanted me to share his adventures (rather jolly, too, that one!), and another sentimental person wanted to marry me because he had seen my photo with a lot of children, labelled 'Auntie Clara and her Babies.' [They were the Neuilly orphans.] Of course it's a pity to miss all these chances, but still . . .!"

The funny incidents of childhood make a strong impression upon those who have a vein of humour. And among Clara Butt's most vivid girlhood memories is one of walking in the streets of Bristol with her brothers, who were in obstreperous mood, and kept pestering her to let them run after a baker's cart, and open the doors at the back to see if the loaves would fall out. They ran off at last, in spite of her remonstrances, opened the doors, and there fell out with a bump not the shower of nice, new, crusty loaves they expected, but a fat old lady, whom, presumably, the baker was taking for a joy-ride!

But life is not all humour, by any means, and no appeal to Clara Butt's heart was ever disregarded. Generosity is natural to her. Even as an almost penniless student, on her way back to College at the beginning of the term, she must needs give to a blind street-singer one of the very few half-crowns that were to serve as pocket-money for the whole of the next three months.

From the very beginning she used her powers as a singer for charity, and as a young girl she often sang

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to the patients in the Bristol Infirmary. From her student days until after her marriage she gave a concert for them in the wards every Christmas, the whole programme being sometimes provided by the Butt family, with the assistance of Alice Jenkins. Clara, Ethel, Pauline, Hazel, Fred, and Herbert Butt all sang, Clara joining her brothers in mandolin trios as well. The accompaniments were played by Alice and several members of the family.

Clara sang *Abide with me* at this Christmas concert, the first year after she had made the song famous, the local Press naïvely commenting that this was "one of her items which have won applause from cultivated hearers." After their marriage Kennerley Rumford joined forces with the family, and was a most popular addition to the programme. In the very early days of her success Clara gave a new piano to the hospital.

Those youthful efforts were pleasantly recalled quite recently, when Clara Butt was making an appeal for the hospital from the platform at a public meeting held in the Colston Hall. The principal speaker, a stranger to her, made reference to the various influences for good that had come into his life, and said that once, long ago, he had gone to a Christmas concert at the hospital, and there had heard the voice of a tall, slim young girl, and had been deeply affected by it. "It was the voice," he concluded, "of the lady who has been addressing you to-night."

The Rowntree-Clifford (West Ham) Mission is a special *protégé* of hers, and for years she used to go there every Monday, to sing to the 'mothers.' She

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opened their new church, to which she gave the organ, for them, and upon this occasion she shook hands with no fewer than a thousand of the good ladies! When it was all over she remarked that she had cause to offer devout thanks that she had not been born a pianist!

She has been a generous supporter of more public charities than anyone can possibly remember—King Edward's Hospital Fund and the Dockland Scheme are perhaps among those especially near to her heart.

She borrowed the idea of 'morning music' from the Bagby recitals in New York, and instituted 'luncheon concerts' at the Savoy for her East End charities. These were given on Tuesdays, and were generously patronized by Society people returning from country week-ends. Like the Bagby recitals, the concerts started at 11.30—there was an hour and a half of good music, and an equally excellent lunch to follow.

She has often personally entertained the unfortunate. Not long ago two big chars-à-bancs brought as passengers two crowded loads of pensioners from the Variety Artists' Benevolent Home to the Rumfords' riverside garden at North Stoke. There the old 'stars' spent the jolliest of days, in such high spirits that some of them gave performances that were ghosts of their long-forgotten turns. One agile old lady, in particular, brought down the house with a dance that she had made famous—how many long years ago? But there were no vain regrets over departed glories. Their hostess sang to them, making them all join in, and everybody was happy.

During the War she gave two *matinées* of a pageant

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called *The Women's Tribute*, for the Chiswick Day Servants' Hostel. In this Ellen Terry appeared as Portia, and many other leading actresses joined. Maude Royden gave an address on "Mothers and Babies," and then on to the stage trooped a crowd of tiny tots, followed by Clara Butt with a bonny youngster on each arm. She sang *My Treasure*, and in doing so with such 'properties' must surely have impressed the audience, as nothing else could have done, with the importance of the work for unmarried mothers and unwanted babies.

At a concert at the Huddersfield Town Hall, when some smartly dressed people went to their seats, in the front row of the dress circle, they found a very dirty little six-year-old girl in the middle one. They discovered that she had somehow squeezed herself in, unnoticed among the audience; and when she was told, "You can't be here without a ticket, you know,"—she proudly replied, "I've got one!"—and produced a grimy tram-ticket, which she had picked up in the street.

It turned out that the poor mite had heard about Clara Butt, and seen pictures of her, and, in the queer, unreasoning way of childhood, had made up her mind to see her. On being told that she must have a ticket to do so she evidently thought that any sort of a 'ticket' would do! After all, she was only six years old.

Clara Butt heard about the incident, sought the child out, and kept in touch with her until she grew up and went into service. And what was more, the episode had given her an idea. She announced a concert in the same hall, a short time later, "For Children Only."

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The result proved that the little heroine of the ticket incident was not the only child who wanted to hear her, for the hall was crowded with over fifteen hundred children. It was a pretty and unforgettable sight, and the youngsters proved as enthusiastic as any grown-up audience that ever happened. Clara Butt has often, since then, been to the Huddersfield school, where the children sing to her, and she sings to them, always ending with *God save the King*, which must surely inspire in them a little of her own love for King and country.

Child-lover as she always was—those who remember her own childhood always recall her mothering a selection of younger brothers and sisters—she also has in a very marked degree the love for animals that so often goes with it. Her personal magnetism has a strong effect upon them, notably upon those shyest of all the humbler creation—the birds—over which she has a power worthy of St Francis of Assisi.

At the flat in which she lived before her marriage she kept many pet birds, one Joey, a bullfinch, being a special favourite. Joey never lived in a cage, but passed all his happy little life as free as air, using the picture-rail as a perch, pecking in the window-boxes, and alighting on the edge of his mistress's plate at meal-times, on the look-out for any dainty titbits that might come his way.

When Clara was leaving for Paris in 1896, for her year of study, she decided to leave her pet with two Misses Thompson, friendly neighbours whose acquaintance she had made through the window of their flat, whence they used to watch her getting into her carriage on the

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way to her engagements. They went to see her off at Victoria Station; and when they returned, and went to find Joey to take him to their own flat, he had disappeared. He must have flown away, they sometimes thought, in search of his beloved mistress. The poor little bird was never found, and his unknown fate, at the cruel claws of some prowling cat or the beaks of sparrows, or of cold and starvation among the unfriendly streets and housetops, often haunted the mistress who had tamed and loved him.

Her home never has been, and never is, without a devoted dog or two. She has had monkeys, and she has now two parrots, one brought home from each of her last Australian tours. Under her spell, one of these has come to be more like a feathered fairy than a bird.

Clara Butt is very domesticated. Fate has decreed that it shall not be necessary, or possible, for her to deal personally with household details; nevertheless, although she is no Martha, she takes a keen interest in everything connected with her home, and a warm personal one in all who work in it. Interior decoration is a hobby of hers, and she has proved the effectiveness of some unusual colour-experiments. The walls and hangings of her own sitting-room at Compton Lodge are black, so providing the ideal background for the pictures with which the walls are almost covered. The ceiling of the drawing-room is blue, sky-colour, and is so restful that it is seldom noticed. Among her special domestic 'effects' are black damask tablecloths for the dining-table, which give to flowers, silver, glass, and china a very special and unusual beauty.



CLARA BUTT WITH ONE OF HER AUSTRALIAN PARROTS

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Nor is her interest in domestic matters merely theoretical. Quite the reverse. It was the master and mistress of the house who draped the hangings on a fine old four-poster bed at Brook Lodge, their riverside home—the mistress, by the way, being nearly brained by the hammer, which Mr Rumford dropped on her head!

Clara Butt wastes no time—even on tour. Much of her household linen is adorned with fine crochet-work, upon which she has worked in artists' rooms all over the world; and she recently embarked light-heartedly upon the Gargantuan task of embroidering Bayeux Tapestry covers for a round dozen dining-room chairs.

Everything interests her. She is a student of nature, of humanity, of books—of everything there is to be studied. She is, as is also Kennerley Rumford, a critical and highly selective reader, with a keen appreciation of the beauty of language—a quality which is reflected in the perfection of their diction and their insistence upon the value of words in singing.

An American writer once described Clara Butt as “a great interpreter of the commonplace”—a subtler compliment than most. To commonplace people—as most of us are—the ‘commonplace’ is the most important part of life, since “life is made up of little things,” and to interpret life is not given to many.

She is a fountain of original ideas. “I believe,” she says, “that I owe my voice to the fact that my mother had a beautiful voice but did not sing. If you give out your gift to the world, you cannot give it to your child.”

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She is something of a mystic, and her mind is in close accord with the work of such writers as Rabindranath Tagore, which has a spirituality of a kind curiously distinct from that of the West. Religion to her is not a thing apart, for formal use on Sundays and festivals, but to be practised on Monday and Tuesday and every other day. It is something to be infused into the spirit of ordinary life, through all the trivial, everyday doings of the workaday world.

Money, simply as money, has little meaning for Clara Butt. The 'money sense,' as it were, is wanting in her. She likes the things that money will buy; she likes money as a symbol, and for the power it can confer of helping others; but in money-making for its own sake she is quite uninterested. Her success has brought her wealth, of course; but she has continued to give money away with the same careless generosity with which she gave away shillings when her shillings were very scarce. On her wedding-day she paid off the last six hundred pounds of her father's overdraft, and other family debts to the tune of many hundreds, and started her own married life without a penny in her banking account.

Accounts were always hateful to her, and sentiment would always rank above financial considerations. In the first crowded months of the success that followed *Orpheus*, her friend Agnes Dobrée was acting as her secretary, and looked after her concert-bookings. Opening the engagement-book one day, she saw to her astonishment that an engagement to sing at one of the big Northern festivals had been crossed off, and "Bristol Cricket Club" scrawled in its place. Agnes

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remonstrated. "What on earth does this mean?" she asked. "That's one of your very biggest engagements, and you've crossed it out." "Oh, that's all right," answered Clara airily. "I can't possibly disappoint those boys!" And she didn't. She turned down the festival, with its kudos and its big fee, without a qualm, and sang, for nothing, to the Bristol boys instead.

Clara Butt was a great 'sport' as a girl, and was always ready to ride or drive when opportunity offered. She was, and is, fond of all sports—of tennis especially, of which she plays a good game. As for that most fashionable of games, golf—she does not play, but she 'talks' it admirably, having had, as she is fond of saying, plenty of practice with a golfing husband. She does not drive a car, which perhaps is just as well, for she was known in her youthful days as a reckless driver when she had a horse's reins in her hands.

The same sporting instinct comes out in her love of gambling, at which she has wonderful luck—of the sort which is chiefly the result of pluck. She was initiated into the joys and mysteries of 'the tables' by Moiseiwitch, an inveterate gambler, on one of her visits to her friends Mr and Mrs W. J. Locke, at Cannes. Since then she has become a well-known figure at Monte Carlo in the season, and has brought off several sensational coups. Once a system of her own, on which she played 'to the limit' with Lady Hulton, proved so successful that they left the tables laden down with *plaques*, followed by several footmen similarly loaded. They exhausted the resources of the change bureaux,

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and finally went to supper with bags and purses and pockets stuffed with banknotes to the tune of some £3500—the £2000 capital with which they had started, and £1500 in winnings.

Clara carefully placed the ornamental silk bag into which she had crammed most of the money, under the table, where she rested her feet upon it to ensure its safety. But it was entirely characteristic of her that, excited as she was over her win, she managed to forget all about her winnings. She left the bag of banknotes where it was when the party left the room after supper, and it was brought upstairs to her by a waiter!

Her throat—that marvellous piece of mechanism—has passed triumphantly through many physical vicissitudes. She has had diphtheria, quinsy, tonsillitis, laryngitis, adenoids, and most of the other disabilities to which the human throat is heir. And twice she has had the narrowest of escapes from injury which might well have silenced her singing voice for ever.

While a scholar at the Royal College of Music, trouble with her tonsils led to her being advised to have an operation. All was ready; she was on the operating-table with the nurse standing beside her, when the doctor, making a preliminary examination of her throat, told her first to sing a deep “Ah,” and then a high one. “Strange,” he commented, “I don’t know how you can sing with a throat like that. You see, it opens when you sing low, and shuts when you sing high. I am going to take a slice off those tonsils.”

From what he said it seemed to Clara that her throat was functioning properly, and then she suddenly

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remembered another College girl who had "had a slice off" her tonsils, and had never sung a high note in tune since!

She began to be badly frightened lest the operation should have the same effect upon her. She knew the best and the worst of her throat as it was, and she decided not to run any risks. She got off the operating-table and flatly refused to have the operation.

She was called up before the Board next day (for the College authorities are "father and mother and sister too" to their scholars), and found herself in serious disgrace. But she braved it, and persisted successfully in her refusal.

The second time was about three years before her marriage. She was continually troubled with colds, and on consulting an eminent throat specialist learned that she had adenoids, and was told that she ought not only to have these out—to which she at once consented—but the whole of her tonsils as well. This she refused to risk, but arrangements were duly made for the adenoid operation. Again she was all ready, in a nursing-home; and, just before the anæsthetist placed the cap over her face, she said, pointing an admonitory finger at the surgeon, "Now, mind! You promised not to touch my tonsils!"

He looked at her oddly, and she sat up. "You mean to take them out!" she said accusingly; and the doctor was forced to confession.

"Well, young lady," he said, "I don't deal in failures, and I consider that this operation *would* be a failure if I did not remove the tonsils. Therefore——"

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She cut him short. "I am *not* having them out!" she said firmly. "And if you won't remove the adenoids without the tonsils, then there won't be an operation at all! My tonsils may be 'all wrong'; but whatever they are, I am going to keep them!"

The surgeon consented to remove the adenoids without touching her tonsils only on her stating in writing that she would not hold him responsible if the operation were a failure.

During her convalescence in the nursing-home she amazed the nurses by her control over her throat-muscles, which she demonstrated by gargling and swallowing while she breathed through her nose! The doctor was told about the 'stunt,' and, marvelling at the performance, deigned to discuss some of the intricacies of her case with his patient.

"You see," she explained to him, "I grew up with these tonsils of mine, and I'm used to them. It might be better for anyone who wasn't a singer to have them out, but—well, in my case I think it is possible that they act like the felt on the notes of the piano, and that without them my voice would be hard and strident."

The doctor seemed suddenly to awaken to the risk that he, and—what was far more important—she, had run.

"My God!" he exclaimed. "I might have ruined you!" And happily for the world Clara Butt still has those 'defective' tonsils.

These were not her only narrow escapes. As has been said before, she never learned to swim, and in consequence has several times been nearly drowned.

The first occasion was in the early days of her success,

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when she was staying at Llandudno. On a pouring wet day Clara and two girl friends decided that even the sea could not be wetter than the rain, and they might just as well bathe. So off they went, in the highest of spirits despite the weather, with Clara, the greatest madcap of the three, playing all sorts of antics to amuse the others. Presently, her machine being farther out in the water than the others, she crept out, carrying an umbrella, and waded as far as she could. Suddenly she unfurled it, singing and dancing and waving her 'gamp,' to the great entertainment of her friends nearer the shore.

All at once, as she danced, she found an awful void beneath her feet, her head went under, and she could not touch bottom. She held her breath and reached desperately down for foothold, but found none. When she came up and screamed for help, her friends, thinking this was all part of the performance, only laughed the louder, instead of coming to her aid. She kept her head, and did her best to save herself, beating the water with her umbrella and using it as a sort of paddle. When the two girls, neither of whom could swim, realized what was the matter, all they could do was to wade out as far as their inferior height would permit towards their six-foot friend. At last, one of them just managed to touch the extreme tip of the umbrella—by now inside out, and twice its ordinary length—which poor Clara was reaching out so desperately towards them. Eventually they grasped it, and pulled her ashore.

She had an even closer call while bathing with her maid off the coast at Slaines Castle, Aberdeenshire—a

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property which she and her husband rented the year before the War. There, again, her great height had enabled her to wade out very much farther than her little French maid, and, relaxing to the dreamy beauty of sea and sky all about her, she found she had drifted away in body as well as in spirit from earthly foothold. "The great waters compassed her about" and closed over her head. She was descending into that strange, dream-filled land through which the drowning pass to eternity, when suddenly there came to her an illuminating flash of faith. In that moment she knew that there *must* be a way out, and, forcing her spirit back from its dreams, she struggled to the surface. She saw she was facing the shore, and somehow, as she had done before, beat her way to shallow water, where she fainted. Help was soon at hand, for one of the house-party, who had watched, powerless and horrified, from the top of the cliff, had come rushing to the water's edge. It was her husband's birthday, the 2nd of September, and a big party, with *tableaux* and dancing, had been arranged in his honour. Somehow, though she had only regained consciousness in her room, after being carried home, she pulled herself together and played the part of hostess with all her accustomed charm. But in spirit she was very far away. She had been close to the gates of the other world, and had looked through them; and those who do that cannot retrace their steps all in a moment.

The third time it was the Thames that nearly ended her career. Going on the river with her husband after dinner, one warm evening, they stepped off the landing-stage into a tiny boat, mistaking it in the pitch-darkness

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for the broad-beamed one that usually lay there. The small craft overturned (neither of them was a light-weight), and they were pitched into deep water. Their friends in the garden heard the splash and their cries (Carmen Hill, who was one of them, vows she nearly lost her 'top G' that night, screaming for help!), and got them out, Clara, by the way, being dragged from a watery grave by her abundant hair! Another of her rescuers was Miss Morris, daughter of the secretary of the Royal Amateur Orchestral Society.

She has had many motor accidents. In Grosvenor Square, on a Queen Alexandra's Rose Day, her car collided with that of ex-King Manoel of Portugal. Fortunately no one was hurt, but the cars were badly damaged. Another time, driving home in a thick fog after a concert at Alexandra Palace, the car ran down some area steps and was disabled, and the singers had to grope their way through the fog to a railway-station.

CHAPTER XIX

A Portrait—The Unimpressed Photographer—Trials of Popularity—Lost and Found—Fun on the Platform—A ‘Spoonerism’—The Little Ways of Interviewers—Musical (?) Animals—A Request to stop!—Singing to a Murderer—Her Majesty’s and the Playhouse—Some Celebrities—Singers as Accompanists—Late for *Elijah*

IT is rather strange, remembering all the nonentities upon whose features our greatest painters have wasted their genius, that Clara Butt’s regal figure should never yet have been immortalized on canvas. And though it is an omission which we may reasonably hope to see remedied, the hand and brain of John Sargent, the king of portrait-painters, who above all men could have done her justice, can use earthly colours and canvas no longer.

The great artist met Clara Butt shortly before her marriage, while he was engaged upon his portrait of Johannes Wolff. He expressed a strong desire to paint her, but her engagements were pressing, and she did not care to cancel them. The making of that portrait was postponed to some indefinite future time—and, as it was to prove, for ever.

She did, however, once have a portrait painted by an artist whose name, perhaps, it is kinder to leave in obscurity. It was a life-size figure, on a ten-feet-six-inches canvas—a ‘white elephant,’ which was turned down by so many exhibitions that it became a standing joke. At last the picture was accepted at Bristol, and exhibited in the only hall with doors big enough to admit it!

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To this exhibition Mrs Butt and her daughter Pauline chanced to go one afternoon, quite unaware that it contained a picture of Clara. They paused before the huge expanse of paint and canvas, and Mrs Butt remarked to her daughter, "That girl reminds me of some one. Who is it, do you think?" Something in the pose seemed familiar, but it was not until they consulted the catalogue that they discovered that the colossus in oil was their own Clara!

Clara Butt delights in relating jokes against herself; and one of her best stories concerns an adventure in Edinburgh. She arrived there one bright winter morning to sing at an afternoon concert, and was met at the station by her friends Hilda and Lily Hanbury, who were appearing at the Theatre Royal. It was one of those rare, perfect Northern days, with the sun shining frostily, and an invigorating nip in the air; and as they walked along Princes Street, catching glimpses of themselves in the shop-windows—Hilda in the smartest of caracal, Clara in chinchilla, Lily's fair Madonna face framed in dark sables, and all three wearing big bunches of fresh violets that they had bought at a florist's as they passed—they felt that all was very right with themselves and with the world. They came to a photographer's, and the same thought struck them simultaneously: "Let's go and have our photos taken!"

So in they went, and posed, all three together, before a camera operated by a somewhat unresponsive little Scotsman. Arrangements for sending copies were then made, and they inquired the price.

"Five guineas, madam," was the reply.

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"But," exclaimed Hilda (the 'business' member of the party), "that's ridiculous! We shouldn't dream of paying such a price. These are well-known people. We——"

The photographer cut her short. "A canna' help that," he remarked coldly. "Ma chairge is five guineas."

Then Clara took a hand. In her deepest tones she said impressively, "But don't you understand? This is Miss Lily Hanbury, the famous actress, who is appearing in Edinburgh!"

"A canna' help that."

"My good man," interposed Lily, "what *are* you thinking of? This"—pointing to Clara with a dramatic gesture—"this is *Clara Butt*, the world's greatest singer, and——!"

"A canna' help that. Yon's ma price."

And, say what they would, the unfeeling Scot returned the same reply. His customers might be looking their best, but they could not hope to best a canny Scot in a financial argument. He not only got his price, but got it cash down, and the trio left his shop five guineas the poorer. They were helpless with laughter at the excellent joke against themselves, and "A canna' help that" was a catchword among them for many years.

To be a popular idol may be enviable, but it has its embarrassments, and the extraordinary proposals that have been made to Clara Butt may be classed among them.

Returning once from a concert at Brighton, accompanied by the faithful Snella, she had just entered her brougham at Victoria Station when a tall man strode up, thrust his head and shoulders into the carriage, and stuck his card under Clara's nose, as he said, "There's

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my card. I have sworn to marry you within a year. And I am a man of my word ! ”

Poor Clara was too startled to speak, and as Snella returned from dealing with the luggage this unconventional suitor stepped back, so that the maid did not see his face. A few days later she went to the door, and returned to say that a gentleman whose card she handed to Clara had called, desiring her to name any fee she wished for an engagement to sing at his house. The name on the card was the same as that on the card which had been thrust upon Clara through the brougham window. On learning this, Snella dealt with the intruder as she felt he deserved, and showed him the door.

A persistent persecution followed. He met Lily Hanbury, and reiterated to her his oath to marry Clara Butt. The affair culminated at the Queen's Hall, when he walked up the centre of the hall, to the side of the platform, where he awaited the singer as she came off. Her brother Wilfred was with her, and she asked him to show the gentleman out, which he did, but not before the madman—for such he obviously was—had threatened to “do her in.” She was obliged at last to apply to the law, and he was restrained from molesting her.

Another madman's proposal was couched in still stranger terms. This man wrote, after her first American visit had been announced, asking her to marry him, and saying that he particularly desired it to be now that she was going to America, as he so much wished to have a child born under the then President of the United States !

After she had sung at Toronto a lady spoke to her and told her of the trouble she had been having with her

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brother, who had missed hearing her that night for the first time. They had followed her from England, and their name was that of the patriotic American who wished his child to be born under the Stars and Stripes!

Yet another romantic admirer sent her a valuable watch—an heirloom—with the hands set at the hour at which he implored her to drive in the Park, so that he might meet her. The gift, needless to say, was returned without thanks, by the singer's maid, and the poetically conceived appointment was kept by its proposer alone.

Clara Butt has had some almost uncannily good luck at different times in recovering possessions that might well have been hopelessly lost. Once, travelling home from Llandudno with her mother and several of her brothers and sisters, she discovered, after changing trains at a junction, that she had left her purse, containing the return tickets of the whole party, and her fees in notes for two concerts, on the seat in the carriage they had just left. She told her brother Herbert, and he rushed back along the other train, carrying out as he ran Clara's shouted injunction to "look out for the woman with the funny hat."

The train, which was crowded, began to move, but just as it did so he 'spotted' the "funny hat," and jumping on the footboard saw that the lady was not only notable for her headgear, but for the fact that she had Clara's bag clasped in her hands! Herbert did not wait to inquire into her motives, but grabbed the bag, and jumped off the footboard on to the platform, whence he breathlessly watched a flabbergasted countenance, beneath a thrice-blessed specimen of comic millinery, disappearing into the distance.

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Clara had even more amazing luck in recovering the little diamond and ruby heart which she purchased with her first gift from Queen Victoria. It was the first real jewel of any value she had ever possessed, and she was so delighted that she decided to have her photograph taken in it. Accordingly she packed up her dress, put in with it the pendant in its little box, and set off with her friend Julia Rowe (now Mrs Simpson, of Saltford, Somerset) in a hansom, to the photographer's.

Having arrived there, the girls took out the dress, and, looking for the pendant, found only the tiny box, empty, with its lid beside it. Rushing to the window, they saw the hansom just driving away, and down rushed Julia to try to catch it. Clara, watching anxiously from the window, saw her run after the cab, which, as good luck would have it, was held up in the traffic. As she watched, her eye caught a glimpse of something on the step that shone and glittered. It was the pendant, hanging by its chain, and she saw her friend dart out into the street, seize it, and regain the pavement without even having been noticed by the driver.

But there are exceptions to all rules, and not even Clara Butt's luck always held good. To commemorate her success in *Orpheus*, Mr and Mrs Blower had had made for her a beautiful golden lute, in the form of a brooch, which she always wore and very greatly valued. One day, some little time before her marriage, she went to St James's Hall to hear Kennerley Rumford sing, and, on leaving, missed her beloved brooch.

Two days later, at Exeter, she received, among the letters forwarded to her, one from a member of the

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audience at St James's Hall, saying that the writer had sat behind her, had seen something fall as she went out, and, picking it up, had found it was a gold lyre or lute brooch. The writer asked for an address to which it could be returned.

Kennerley Rumford, who was on tour with her, and to whom she was then not yet engaged, came into the room as she was reading her letters, and inquired, "Who's that from?" By way of teasing him, she refused to tell, and in the little struggle that followed to obtain possession of the document it fell into the fire. With it perished the name and address of the finder of the brooch. Her failure to reply must have been taken as a tacit permission to keep it, for, despite inquiries through the police and advertisements in the Press, and though the discovery of Clara Butt's address at any time could not, one would have thought, have presented any very particular difficulty, it was never returned.

Concert tours are made up of other things besides the serious business of making music ; and the Butt-Rumford tours, especially in the care-free pre-War days, were an unending procession of good-natured practical jokes among the members of the party. A notable feature was that the joke almost invariably rebounded upon the joker.

Johannes Wolff, the violinist, was very fond of taking the usual accompanist's place at the piano when Clara Butt and Kennerley Rumford were singing their duets, and as they came on to the platform they used to put all sorts of odds and ends on the keyboard in the hope of disconcerting him. One day Kennerley Rumford, as he passed the piano, managed to place a large box of

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liver pills on the notes, but Wolff turned the trick in his own favour. He rose from his seat, walked to the front of the platform, and, with a low bow, gravely presented the box to Kennerley Rumford, who had to go through the duet holding his liver pills in his hand in full view of the audience.

They used to play a similar trick on F. A. Sewell, who had a weakness for fruit, and always liked to have some in the artists' room. So that he should not feel hungry on the platform, he often found a nice juicy pear, or a banana, placed ready for him in the middle of the keyboard!

Leo Stern, a 'cellist who often toured with them, was full of fun, and used to be mercilessly chaffed by the rest of the party on account of a supposed fondness for the 'bawbees.' While he was playing one day, in a provincial hall, Kennerley Rumford and the others, standing well hidden at the side of the platform, which was banked up with flowers and pot-plants, started to 'rub in' the joke by gently rolling pennies on to the platform towards him, going on to shillings and half-crowns as the supply of coppers gave out. But the 'cellist distinctly scored. He was not in the least put out; he merely stooped, when he had finished playing, and picked up and pocketed the tributes so generously offered him by his friends and colleagues. They never played that particular joke again. It was too expensive.

On one tour Johannes Wolff, Leo Stern, and Samuel Liddle used to open the programme with a trio; and it was a favourite arrangement between the violinist and 'cellist to gag elaborate runs and *cadenzas*, in the hope

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of catching the pianist napping. But however elaborate their interpolations, they never succeeded. He always picked them up, and was in with them at the death. He said nothing, but one night he made up his mind to get his own back. Wolff and Stern had surpassed themselves in the concoction of a most marvellous *cadenza*, and had sailed off into its intricacies hoping to see Liddle's brows draw together in a puzzled frown. But he smiled quietly, rose from the piano, and walked off the platform, leaving them to finish the number alone.

Clara Butt conspired one day with Mr Sewell to upset Kennerley Rumford in the duet *Night Hymn at Sea*. A portion of the accompaniment is in triplets of chords, and Sewell was to go on repeating them from the bottom to the top of the piano, so that Rumford would wonder what on earth had happened, and have no idea where to come in. But once more the biter was bit. When they came on to sing, Clara became helpless with laughter over her own joke, and it was she, and not her husband, who was unable to sing, and he had to sing through the first verse alone.

F. A. Sewell was no more to be disconcerted by monkey-tricks than was Liddle. Kennerley Rumford delighted in pasting strips of paper over bars of his songs, so that the unlucky accompanist, who was probably reading at sight, would have to improvise. He too scored off the joker in his own way. He played the accompaniment of one of Kennerley Rumford's songs, deftly weaving into it, all the way through, the strain of *Yankee Doodle*, which was all but the singer's downfall.

A quite unpremeditated piece of comedy was intro-

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duced into a provincial choral society's performance of *The Golden Legend*, in which Clara Butt was singing soon after her *début*. It so happened that the baritone soloist, who was an exceptionally short man, arrived late ; and just as she sang the words, "Who is it coming under the trees?" he appeared, tiptoeing softly to his place, behind the tall palms that decorated the front of the platform. The effect of the little man approaching the tall girl, as though in response to her words, was so irresistibly funny that the audience forgot its manners, and gave way to helpless laughter.

Poor Clara played the unconscious comedian to her great embarrassment at one of her earliest appearances at the St James's Hall Ballad Concerts. She was singing an old-fashioned ballad, in which she had to imitate the note of a cuckoo, and had worked very hard to bring it to perfection. She succeeded in making it most realistic, and the first time she did it the audience took it quite seriously. But the second time they smiled a little : and the third, feeling a trifle embarrassed, she held up her music, scarcely realizing what she was doing, in front of her face. The audience then laughed outright, for the effect, as she dropped her hands again, was exactly that of a child playing peep-bo !

She once, in later years, perpetrated an awful 'spoonerism' at a big afternoon concert at Aldershot, at which the Duke of Connaught was present. She was singing a duet with Kennerley Rumford, in which the words 'flooded bowers' occurred, and she reversed the initial consonants ! It was one of those terrible moments when there is absolutely nothing to be done but carry

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on and try to look as though nothing had happened. But it was long before Kennerley Rumford, or F. A. Sewell, who was playing for them, let her hear the last of it.

The interviewer who succeeds in penetrating to the presence of a celebrity probably wastes little time in speculation concerning the sensations of his victim. His only thought is 'copy'; and it matters not at all to him that the person he is interviewing is a sensitive and possibly a highly temperamental human being, from whom the sight of his businesslike notebook and pencil has driven away every original idea that he or she ever possessed. For the most part, perhaps, the interviewer is not the person most to blame. Interviewing, like criticism, is an art; and editors are prone to forget, in the one case as in the other, that some qualification is necessary for the job. Hence it is that the luckless artist has so often to submit to the pointless questions of some callow reporter, who, at best, throws himself on their mercy with the admission, after a few egregious blunders, "To tell you the truth, I don't know a thing about music!" or, at worst, writes up an interview that is as pointless as it is vulgar.

Clara Butt's experiences of interviewers are legion, but the intelligent ones among them have been lamentably few—so few that they can only be regarded as the exceptions that prove the rule. In America she talked to a Pressman for half an hour or so on the subject of modern English music, to which he appeared to listen with intelligent interest. When she had finished he queried brightly, "Have you seen the new gum-boot?" "No-n-no," replied the singer, wondering for the

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moment, in view of the recent conversation, whether he could be referring to some new orchestral instrument.

"My! You want to see them—they're fine!" enthused the reporter. "If a girl laces them *half-way*, it means she wants a beau—and if she laces 'em all the way she doesn't! By heck! they're the goods!"

Clara Butt bade the interviewer farewell, still completely in the dark as to what all this might have to do with English music. In the evening papers her views on gum-boots and rubbers were headlined in big type; but of her observations regarding music in England, or anywhere else, there was not a single word.

She was lying, in a frilly tea-gown, on the divan in her hotel sitting-room, when the "Society editress" of an American journal called upon her. This lady made no pretensions to interest in anything but the singer's stature, and she concentrated upon it from the first. "My!" she said, looking down at Clara's recumbent figure appraisingly, "I don't believe you're as tall as they say! Six feet two and a quarter, they told me. Waal, I can't believe that's true!" And she harped on the same string until Clara's patience was exhausted. She rose from the couch, and gradually drew herself up, until she seemed to the shrinking Presswoman to be at least ten feet high, and walked across to the mirror.

"Come here!" was all she said.

The Society editress came, saw her own handful of inches reflected by the side of the woman who she had said she didn't believe was so very tall, and capitulated.

"Gee!" she said again. "Waal, I should smile!"

Next day, in one-inch type across a news-sheet,

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Clara read "Six Feet Two and a Quarter in her Silk Stockings" as the title of an interview which merely embroidered *ad nauseam* the same intellectual theme.

She arrived one morning at Pittsburg, hungry and tired, and longing for a bath and breakfast, only to be met by a group of reporters even more voracious for 'copy' than she was for eggs and bacon. She answered them rather wearily. "What did she think of Pittsburg?" Well, what she'd seen of it so far looked pretty black, and she quoted to them their own classic :

Mary had a little lamb,
Its fleece was white as snow,
But she brought it down to Pittsburg—
Look at the dam' thing now !

The reporters' spirits were crushed, but not broken ; and they returned to the charge. "Well, anyway," said one, "A guess you haven't had time to see our city. But A guess you've been quite a while in the States. Guess you find Amurrica all right?"

She replied to the effect that she didn't see how America could help being right, sometimes, anyway, because the Americans were always 'guessing.' This remark too was immortalized in print.

There are interviewers of every sort and kind—some bombastic, some soulful, and some merely stupid. But happily, albeit unconsciously, most of them share one saving grace : they are all more or less funny. For two can play at interviewing, as at other games ; the reporter is not necessarily the only 'chiel' among the party who is 'takin' notes,' and more often than not it is the interviewee that gets the best story.



CLARA BUTT AND KENNERLEY RUMFORD WITH SOME OF THEIR PETS

The parrot is 'Robin,' a 'galah,' brought home from their last Australian tour.

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The 'gushing type, above all, get short shrift from Clara Butt. To a young man who told her soulfully, "Madame Butt, you are a poem!" she observed, shrugging her shoulders, "Well, of course I know my feet are large, but I shouldn't have thought they were as bad as all that; poems are *all* feet, aren't they?"

The only interviewer who ever really won her heart was a genial Irishman, who, meeting her on arrival, cold and weary after a wretched crossing to the shores of Erin, said consolingly, "Shure, thin, it's toired ye must be of tellin' all the things that's happened to yez ever since ye wuz born; if ye wuz to shtart wid yer death, now, and wurrk backwards, 'twould p'raps be aisier for yez!"

Animals are often extremely susceptible to music, and Clara Butt has often experimented upon them with her voice. Many of her dogs have obviously enjoyed listening to her, and she has taught several of them to 'sing' with her. Her greatest success in this direction was with her Pekingese, "Mr Smee," who would follow her voice as faithfully up and down the scale as he would follow his mistress in person about the house and garden. So remarkable were this little dog's vocal efforts that his fame spread abroad, and the *Daily Mail* actually sent a reporter down to North Stoke to 'interview' him, and published a *critique* of his singing in the Press.

She was singing in the drawing-room at Hampstead one day when a dog, passing down the road outside, stopped to listen, then sat down on his haunches, threw back his head, and joined in. So loud were his 'notes' that she heard them from indoors, and, thinking a dog had been hurt, hurried out to investigate. She found

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that a small crowd had collected to listen and laugh at the dog's share in the duet, which had come to an abrupt end as she stopped singing. She called the dog, but he took no notice ; and one of a party of men working on the road remarked, "He don't like your singing, mum, that's what it is." "Oh, doesn't he?" said Clara. "I think he does, or he wouldn't have stayed ; and as soon as I stop he's going away." Sure enough, the dog, evidently realizing that the concert was over, had turned tail, and was disappearing round the corner.

She has never known whether an incident that happened at Herne Bay, of which a horse was the hero, was to be regarded as a compliment to her singing, or the reverse. She was driving with her friends Hilda and Lily Hanbury in a victoria, jogging quietly along a country road, when Lily, obeying a sudden impulse, said, "Sing something, Clara. It's such a perfect evening ; it would be lovely to hear you." She did so, but no sooner had she started than the horse pulled up.

"What's the matter?" chorused the girls.

"Nothing, miss," answered the driver, whipping up the horse, which started off again.

Presently Clara resumed her interrupted song, and the carriage came to a standstill once more.

The driver turned round on his box. "Would ye mind stopping your singing, miss?" he implored. "The horse *will* listen."

When singing a duet at a concert at Bradford, Clara Butt and her husband were naturally rather disconcerted when the audience suddenly began to titter, and finally broke out into roars of laughter. They stopped, com-

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pletely at a loss ; and then saw that a big black cat was walking round them, tail in air, purring its hardest, and evidently delighted with itself and with the music. It flatly refused to be 'shoo-ed' away, and finally had to be removed forcibly by the caretaker, who, when remonstrated with, remarked, "He only comes in to *your* concerts, ma'am !"

One of the miscellany of strange experiences that have come into the life of Clara Butt occurred at Nottingham, when she was singing there on a provincial tour. She received a note from the chaplain of the local prison, telling her of a condemned prisoner who refused to speak or to read his Bible, and remained utterly unresponsive to all attempts at spiritual consolation. His execution was imminent ; and the one hope that the man's heart might be touched lay, so the chaplain believed, in Clara Butt's voice.

In the cold grey of early morning she drove to the prison, was admitted, and heard the grim gates clash to behind her, as she was led along the gloomy passages to the hall on to which the condemned man's cell opened. The door had been set ajar, and a curtain guarded on each side by a warder was hung across it.

In those melancholy surroundings Clara Butt stood and sang *O rest in the Lord* and *Abide with me*, knowing that among those who could also hear her were two others, quite young men, almost boys, who were condemned to die. It was a ghastly contrast to the applauding, encore-demanding audience that had acclaimed her and laden her with flowers on the platform only a few hours earlier !

After her return to London she received a note from

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the chaplain, telling her that, though the condemned man had still refused to speak to those about him, he had opened the Bible immediately after she had finished singing, and had continued to read it up to the time of his execution.

Clara Butt has been associated with several historic events in connexion with the London stage. Mr Beer-bohm (afterwards Sir Herbert) Tree took over the old Her Majesty's Theatre in 1896, and the new building was opened the following year by Clara Butt. She was in Paris, studying with Bouhy, when Tree went over to arrange for the decoration of the theatre, and she helped him in the selection of the curtains and colourings. She also opened the Playhouse for Cyril Maude a year or two later. Another important theatrical event at which she assisted was at His Majesty's when, at the 4000th and last performance of *Chu Chin Chow*, after the longest run in the history of the British stage, she sang the National Anthem from her box.

She is, perhaps more than any other singer, associated with the Albert Hall. Probably there is no other who can adequately fill it (in any sense), and an American writer once sought to know whether that appallingly huge building had been built in intelligent and optimistic anticipation of the coming into the world of Clara Butt, or whether Nature, in her abhorrence of a vacuum, had created the voice to fit the hall! A popular cartoonist, also, once represented the same great building with Clara Butt's head appearing through the apex of the dome. Below the drawing was the query, "If Clara Butt grew?"

There are probably few celebrities whom Clara Butt has not met at some time or another in the course of

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her career. She often met Caruso at big London 'At Homes,' where both were engaged to sing; and frequently encountered, in the same way, Paderewski, a gentle, quiet, retiring man, with whom Madame Paderewski usually travels, and brings her more practical mind to bear upon the little problems of every day, which are uncongenial to his dreamy temperament.

Clara Butt gave a recital with Kreisler at the Albert Hall a few years ago, and has appeared with him at several Command performances. She was closely associated with Patti, and sang at most of her London concerts, including the very last public appearance of the *prima donna*. This was at a charity concert at the Mansion House, where Tetrizzini was present, and, overcome with emotion, fell on her knees as she bade farewell to the great artist whom the world was never to hear again.

Clara Butt made her first appearance with Albani, and her very first tour was also with the great soprano. They often toured together in after-years.

Ysaÿe joined Clara Butt and Kennerley Rumford on one of their provincial tours after the War; and was with them in Ireland when he received news of his wife's death, and had to abandon the remainder of the tour.

Galli-Curci is an intimate friend, and it was at Compton Lodge that she spent her last night in England.

Clara first met Constance Collier at Her Majesty's Theatre, with Lily Hanbury, and a lifelong friendship has endured between them ever since.

The letters that Clara Butt has received, claiming relationship with her by virtue of both her father's and her mother's names, are numberless. It may be remarked in

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passing, by way of dispelling a popular fallacy, that Sir Alfred Butt has no family connexion with the singer. He is fond of saying that he goes about denying or claiming relationship as the mood takes him, and that his son, at school, spends all his spare time informing curious new boys that "No, he is *not* Clara Butt's son!"

Clara Butt once had a very bad quarter of an hour through not ascertaining the hour of a performance of *Elijah* in which she was singing at the Leeds Festival. The rehearsal on the previous day had been at two o'clock, and she rather casually assumed, without inquiry, that the performance would be at the same hour. What was her horror the following morning, when a messenger, sent in hot haste to her hotel by Sir Arthur Sullivan, who was conducting, told her that the performance, which was at the uncomfortable hour of 11.30, was actually about to start! She hurled herself into the nearest cab, and raced to the hall, which she reached in time to begin her part with only a slight delay; but it was a very unpleasant experience, and she never took the hour of a concert for granted again!

Clara Butt and Kennerley Rumford have played each other's accompaniments in public on many occasions. At a concert with the Royal Orchestral Society at the Queen's Hall, at which King Edward and the Prince of Wales were present, both Clara and her husband were singing; and when Kennerley Rumford returned to the platform to sing his encore, his wife came with him, and played the accompaniment of *Here's a Health unto his Majesty!* The King sent for both performers after the National Anthem had been sung, and thanked them personally.

CHAPTER XX

Orpheus again—Grim Tragedy behind the Scenes—Another World-tour—Midnight Concerts—Meetings with Melba—Return Visit to America—Death of Roy Rumford—Australia again—Public Speaking—An Indian Tour—L'Envoi

GRAND opera had a hard struggle to regain its footing after the War. "The times were out of joint," and London Society seemed indisposed to take up its opera-going habit again where it had laid it down in 1914. Something quite out of the ordinary was needed; and Sir Thomas Beecham conceived the idea of engaging Clara Butt for four nights, to play her original part of *Orpheus*. It was to be a magnificent production, and all her own ideas as to setting and scenery were to be carried into effect.

When Clara Butt's appearance was announced public interest in the event was intense, and Covent Garden was 'sold out' for each performance. Her impersonation was acclaimed as magnificent; and Press and public agreed that the stage had lost its greatest dramatic contralto when Clara Butt rejected its claims in favour of the concert platform. Sentimental interest in the performance was also naturally very great; both in the artist herself, in whom vivid memories were awakened of the young, untried girl who had last played the part at the Lyceum over a quarter of a century before, and in the audiences, to whose imagination the

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romantic repetition of the famous singer's first success could not fail to make a strong appeal.

Unfortunately financial difficulties prevented Sir Thomas Beecham from carrying out his intentions and Clara Butt's wishes in regard to the production. This, therefore, left a great deal to be desired. But that in no way affected Clara Butt's personal triumph, which was tremendous, and she had to take sixteen recalls at the close of the last performance.

A tragic incident, quite unknown to the public, unhappily marred the production for those behind the scenes. At the rear of the stage, immediately behind the back-cloth, there yawned a huge, unprotected opening in the boards, giving on to the depths below, where spare sets and scenery were stored. Clara Butt, as a stranger to the place, had been warned again and again to be careful of this pitfall, and was fully awake to the danger of what was quite palpably a death-trap. On the second night a strange sense of tragedy oppressed her as she sang the great *aria* in the first act; and as she came off, she found a little group, with scared white faces, gathered about the brink of the dark chasm behind the back-drop.

A stage-hand, engaged in shifting scenery, having missed his footing, had fallen over the edge—and was lying, bruised and lifeless, among the properties below, some of which, even as he fell, were being brought up on trolleys for the next scene.

The performance went on, and the audience little knew that the scenery behind the singer, and the steps up which Orpheus passed to the Elysian Fields, were



CLARA BUTT AS ORPHEUS, 1919

Photo Bassano, Ltd.

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bespattered with the blood of a man who lay dead not a dozen yards away.

At the end of the year the Rumfords set off upon another tour of Canada, the United States, New Zealand, and Australia. The time was ripe for it, for after the years of strain and stress their old friends were more eager than ever to meet and hear them. They revisited most of the towns in which they had appeared on their 1913-14 tour, and were welcomed everywhere with the same enthusiasm.

On this tour Clara Butt's abnormal power of attracting an audience was demonstrated with even more force than usual, under rather peculiar circumstances. On the way back to Canada from New Zealand, for the return visit (they had followed the plan of the previous tour), their manager received a 'wireless' message from Vancouver, reading, "First concert at 12.15 A.M." They decided that either the message was a mistake, or else that some one concerned had, to put it in local phrase, 'bats in the belfry'; but on arrival at Vancouver, mobbed, as usual, by Pressmen, they discovered the truth. The great Horse Show building, capable of holding ten thousand people, had been burnt down, and there was no other building large enough to hold the audience that demanded to hear them—except a cinema. Therefore, the cinema it had to be; and, as the concert could not take place till the 'pictures' were over, it had been fixed at a quarter past midnight!

This peculiar arrangement, however, justified itself. The hall was crowded to the doors, and the demands for encores were just as vociferous as though it were

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not high time for all really good people to be abed ! City folk, whose custom it was to return, after business hours, to their homes in distant suburbs, remained in town all night instead, sleeping during what remained of it (for the concert continued well into the wee sma' hours) on shake-downs at their shops and offices.

Several more of these midnight concerts were given, all with equal success, even when, as happened on two occasions, there was a terrific snowstorm. The success of the experiment led to one or two being given in other places, at one of which the train to which the party's special coach was attached was held up until the concert was over. Owing to a multiplication of encores and other delays, the travellers' arrival was overdue, and a rather irritable railway inspector wanted to know the reason why. The situation was saved by a resourceful Australian secretary, who invited the taciturn official on to the train, and blithely entertained him with Captain Rumford's best cigars and whisky, until he really didn't care whether the train left that night or the week after next, while infuriated bagmen and tourists tramped the platform in the bitter cold, asking all and sundry "Why the ——, the —— train was held up?"

On this tour Melba was covering much the same ground as the Rumfords, usually a little ahead of them ; but at Calgary, by some mischance, both concerts had been fixed for the same night. On the morning of their arrival the two special cars were 'parked' in the station side by side, and Dame Clara heard Dame Nellie

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singing like a lark long before she was out of bed. Soon a note arrived from the Australian singer, with an invitation to breakfast, and when the two parties forgathered the Pressmen began to swarm about them. Dame Clara soon explained the situation. "When I heard both concerts were to be the same night, I knew we should be all right," she said. "I knew *we should get Dame Nellie's overflow!*" There was plenty of good-natured badinage over the situation, which was summed up by one of the reporters thus: "I left the two Dames standing hand in hand, quarrelling over whose 'overflow' the other was to have."

Dame Clara received a letter from the Women's Club, wishing to entertain her to lunch. This was followed by a second, explaining that, having no idea that the concerts would be on the same day, a similar invitation had been sent to Melba. They now proposed to arrange the matter by giving Dame Clara a lunch and Dame Nellie a tea on the same day, as both were to spend only one day in Calgary. Both Dames refused, on the score that social engagements could not be undertaken on the day of a concert, and the club solved the knotty problem by giving them a joint supper-reception when the concerts were over.

Both concerts were crowded; and so was the reception. Many of the guests had solved the difficulty by going to half of each programme. The two Dames were expected to shake hands with every one present—a strenuous task much enlivened by Melba's personal remarks and pertinent comments upon some of those presented. The climax was reached when a gushing

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little lady trotted up to Melba, and, seizing her hand, said excitedly, "You know, I've heard Galli-Curci!"

"Oh, yes . . . have you? . . . very interesting," murmured Melba, rather wondering why this piece of information was vouchsafed to her.

"Yes," went on the enraptured one, "*and you're the next best!*" Then she departed, obviously convinced that she had just said the right thing, and paid a very graceful compliment.

Both Dames, by this time, were almost helpless with laughter; and it was only Clara Butt's whispered words, "Come on, we must pull ourselves together, Nellie!" that saved them from collapsing in a storm of giggles.

In September 1923 the Rumfords crossed the Atlantic again, and toured Canada, starting at Halifax and revisiting all the principal cities. In America they also revisited New York, Chicago, and Minneapolis.

They met with all their former success; but the journey was a sad one, for, only a few weeks before sailing, they had suffered the terrible blow of the death from meningitis of their elder son, Roy. He was to have sailed for Canada about a fortnight before his parents, to play in a specially picked cricket team, the Free Foresters, against a Canadian side, and was looking forward to meeting his parents and joining them on their tour. He was staying the night at Sir James Barrie's when he was taken suddenly ill. He was brought home to Brook Lodge, and thence to a nursing-home in Park Lane, where he died after a few days' illness. He was buried in the little churchyard at



CLARA BUTT AND KENNERLEY RUMFORD IN MAORI DRESS

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North Stoke, near his parents' riverside home. The King and Queen and Queen Alexandra sent gracious messages of sympathy.

In 1925 the appreciative Australians and New Zealanders 'encored' the singers once more, and for the fourth time they undertook the long journey to the Antipodes. They repeated their concerts and their successes without any diminution of the former enthusiasm, and again a lengthy series of concerts had to be given in each city to satisfy the demand.

A certain nervous Lord Mayor added greatly to the gaiety of nations at a civic reception by welcoming Clara Butt with patriotic pride as "the greatest of all Australian singers." There was a general laugh, and some one set him right by a hoarse whisper of, "No, that's Melba!" The poor man, trying his best to set things right again, only grew more and more entangled, and finally addressed Clara cordially as "Dame Nellie Butt."

Another, but less innocent, confusion of the two Dames occurred in a palpably swindling 'begging-letter.' It started, "Dear Dame Clara Butt," asked politely for the loan of a snug little sum of a hundred pounds or so, and wound up, evidently a trifle absent-mindedly, "Relying upon your well-known kindness of heart, dear Dame Nellie"! *Verb. sap.!*

After her return in 1926 Clara Butt was as busy as ever. Charity, social and professional life, and patriotic work—she was prominent with Commander Locker-Lampson in the arrangement of his great anti-Communist rallies

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in the summer of 1927—left her little leisure for the solitude and study that she loves.

In the autumn of 1927 she decided to put into execution a lifelong desire to visit India ; and accordingly, at the close of her provincial tour, she set sail on a holiday trip, accompanied by her secretary and a friend, arriving in Calcutta in time for the Christmas race-week, and to see the running of the famous 'Cup.' The tour had not been intended as a professional one, but the public demand to hear her was not to be gainsaid, and she gave three enormously successful concerts. At these a large proportion of the audiences consisted of Indians. She had often been in doubt as to whether Western music, and with it her own singing, would prove as unpleasing to Eastern ears as Eastern music does to ours. But her speculations upon this point were set most convincingly at rest. Her Indian hearers' enthusiasm was tremendous. The most picturesque and extravagant compliments were paid to her, and as each successive concert was announced Indian princes and others would hasten to reserve whole rows of stalls before even the tickets were printed or the box-plan opened. She speedily became deeply interested in local affairs, and announced a free recital in the Calcutta Cathedral, at which a collection amounting to several hundred pounds was taken for the Kalimpong Children's Homes. The crowd, not only in but around the cathedral, was so dense that it was difficult to gain access to the building.

Dame Clara Butt became acquainted while in Calcutta with Miss Cornelia Sorabji, who had studied law at Oxford and London, and was well known in English

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Society in her younger days. With her Dame Clara visited Dr Rabindranath Tagore, spending several days at the guest-house of the university he has founded near Bolpur, Bengal.

She visited Burma, and at Rangoon (as at all the other large towns she visited) she was persuaded to give concerts—always with the same success, something in the informality of the arrangements seeming to give them a greater charm than those of a more stereotyped tour.

The little party found time for a trip by river-steamer up the Irrawaddy to Mandalay, and then returned to India. There, later, she made the acquaintance of Gandhi, visiting him several times at his humble farmhouse home near Ahmedabad, and singing *Abide with me* (to the old hymn-tune) one evening at the prayers which it is his custom to hold at dusk, on the river-bank.

Another prominent personality with whom she came into contact was Mrs Annie Besant, whom she visited at the Theosophical College, Adyar, Madras. During her tour she was the guest both of his Excellency the Viceroy (Baron Irwin) and of the Governors of the various provinces she visited. She also spent a week at the palace of his Highness the Jam Sahib (better known to the British public as 'Ranjitsinhji,' of cricket fame) at Jamnagar, where he entertained at the same time the Harcourt-Butler States Inquiry Committee, and a huge concourse of Indian ruling princes and their retinues. She sang the National Anthem at the magnificent banquet which marked the close of the week's festivities.

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It had been Dame Clara Butt's intention to extend her tour farther east, and to visit China and Japan; but while at Rangoon she received news of her daughter's engagement (to Major Claude Cross, of the I.M.S.), and of her desire to be married in June on her parents' own wedding-day. Accordingly the tour was curtailed—probably only to be postponed—and Captain Rumford sailed for Bombay in order to accompany his wife on the journey home.

The effect Dame Clara Butt produced in India by her understanding sympathy, as well as by her singing, cannot but have been of the highest value at the present difficult stage in Indian affairs. Press comment several times spoke of her as “doing a great national work” in this regard.

During the previous year she had found a new means of expression—that of public speaking. She made several ‘political’ speeches; and at two concerts which she gave at the Queen's Hall, in aid of Miss Maude Royden's work at the Guildhouse, Eccleston Square, she not only sang, but spoke eloquently on a subject very near to her heart—the need for a religion that is not a habit, but a reality.

By instinct she is a teacher, and it has been well said that “all her songs are sermons.” It may be that when the time comes, as come, alas! it must—though God grant that it be long delayed—when that lovely voice can sing to us no longer, it will still be able to express the soul of the singer to us in speech.

She stands among us in these troublous days of peace, as she stood in the dark days of war, a gracious

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and beneficent figure, shining like "a good deed in a naughty world."

May the gods grant her immortality! For there is only one Clara Butt, and we shall never look upon her like again.

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